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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACTORS INFLUENCING ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS' REFERRAL DECISIONS

by

©

VALERIE ELAINE CAMERON

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION
IN
SPECIAL EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL, 1988

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Factors Influencing Elementary Teachers' Referral Decisions submitted by Valerie Elaine Cameron in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Special Education.

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Dr. G. Fox

K L Ward

Dr. K. Ward

DATE July 22, 1988

DEDICATION

To the children in our schools, whose predicament motivated this study.

ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was developed and employed with 43 elementary teachers located in rural Alberta school districts to determine the factors influencing the teachers' referral decisions. The purpose of the exploratory study was to determine if child-dependent factors and child-independent factors influenced teachers' referral decisions. Data was gathered on 43 questions upon which the teachers were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale; sixteen vignettes describing differing child-dependent characteristics upon which teachers were asked to make a referral decision; and two open-ended questions in which the teachers were first asked to describe any barriers or facilitating factors to making referrals and, secondly, to describe a child they had previously referred.

The results provided some support for the hypothesis that both the child-dependent factors (naturally occurring child characteristics) of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, attractiveness, combined with behavior and academic achievement, and the child-independent factors related to the system, the school and the individual teacher, influenced teachers' referral decisions. Further the results provided some support for future investigation into these factors.

Overall, the results supported the need for change in current referral practices. Recommendations and possible alternative referral strategies are discussed briefly in the final chapter.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE INVESTIGATION

Early identification of special needs children has proven to be of paramount importance to allow for the early intervention and prevention of unsatisfactory psychological, emotional and academic development. Edgington (1975), in her ten-year follow-up of 25 children placed in resource rooms, concluded that early admittance into the resource room was mandatory in avoiding "failure to achieve". Prior to admittance into any special services including the resource room programs and/or other helping services in Alberta, the child, typically, would have to be referred and assessed by specialists in the area of concern to determine the veracity of such a placement.

In rural Alberta, direct outreach service is limited. Most small communities receive outreach psychoeducational and speech pathology service. Other services which can be found within the communities include Mental Health Services, Social Services, and Public Health Services. Special services found within the school are, usually, limited to resource room programs.

Elementary classroom teachers play an integral part in facilitating the early identification of special needs children. They are the primary referral agents of special needs children (Perlmutter & Parus, 1985). The relationship between the teacher and child is more intimate and intense than with any other professional. Teachers for a variety of reasons; (training, experience, etc.), are often a more valid and reliable referral source of special needs children than parents, community health nurses, physicians and/or social workers (Ferinden, Sherman & Linden, 1970). Thus, a great deal more needs to be known about the factors which may be influencing teachers' referral decisions.

The purpose of this study is to examine, from the teachers' perspective, the factors which they feel influence their referral decisions. While on the surface it is assumed that teachers' referrals are typically made based on the observable symptoms or characteristics displayed by the child, there is an increasing amount of evidence in the literature that factors independent of those related to the child may be crucial and/or primary elements with regard to the initial referral decision (Ritter, 1978). Some of the factors which may be affecting teachers' referral decisions and the dynamics of the referral process are investigated in this study. The factors thought to be most influential and worthy of further investigation are system-related factors, school-related factors, teacher-related factors and child-related factors. In addition, the effects of the teacher's training and experience, average class size, level of grades taught and number of past referrals are factors which may be influencing their responses.

Significance of the Problem

The literature related to the factors affecting teachers' referral decisions, it appears that the bulk of research focuses on what happens after the referral (i.e. assessment and placement) as opposed to focusing on the preceding step of what caused the referral initially. Studies which have investigated teachers' referral decisions are suggestive rather than definitive. They indicate the need for further extensive exploration (Algozzine, Ysseldyke & Hill, 1982).

Factors which are entirely independent of, and unrelated to the child could be responsible for the referral or lack of it. If teachers are not aware of their responsibility to make referrals many special needs children may be overlooked. If teachers do not have the knowledge required to identify special needs children, many will not be recognized. If the teachers find the referral form and/or procedure too time-consuming or complicated, it will contribute to a lack of referrals. If the assessment services are not perceived as credible, teachers may not use them. If the receiving services are not perceived as beneficial, the number of referrals may diminish. If the teacher is intimidated by parental contact the number of referrals could vary.

In summary, if the solutions to these and similar kinds of problems were known modifications and/or accomodations could possibly be made at the system-level, school-level and teacher-level to facilitate more appropriate referrals. The alternative to understanding teachers' referral decisions is to perpetuate the "status quo". Unfortunately, "status quo" results in many special needs children not having their needs met and other children not requiring special services being served (Algozzine, Ysseldyke & Hill, 1982). Both of the aforementioned consequences are unacceptable.

The referral decision is of considerable significance; "The process of making referrals is an inherently discretionary act on the part of teachers..." (Pugach, 1985, p.133). In choosing to make a referral, teachers can anticipate that the referred student will be subsequently placed (Algozzine et al., 1982; Shepard & Smith , 1983; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981; Christentenson et al., 1982). Thus, the teacher, the student, and the system have a vested interest in the initial referral.

Assumptions

1. That a referral for further assessment of a child would benefit both the child and the teacher.

2. That Elementary teachers are the professionals with the most potential for making referrals.

3. That Elementary school teachers are capable of making more appropriate referrals under a variety of different circumstances.

4. That factors independent of the child are related to teachers' referral decisions.

5. That child-related factors influence teachers' referral decisions.

6. That Elementary school teachers will respond to the questionnaire honestly.

Methodology

Chapter III describes the method and procedures in full detail. A brief synopsis is presented here.

A questionnaire containing seven distinct sections was developed from the current body of literature related to teachers' referral decisions. Section One contained questions related to the individual respondents. Sections Two, Three, and Four contained a total of 43 statements about system-related, school-related and teacher-related factors. The respondents were asked to make a choice based on their feelings using a 5-point Likert-type scale throughout these sections.

Section Five required the respondents to give an unguided written response. Teachers were asked to list both the factors which they perceived as barriers to making referrals and the factors which they perceived as facilitating referrals.

Section Six was comprised of sixteen vignettes, each describing a child. The respondents were required to make a hypothetical referral decision. If they could not make a YES/NO decision they were asked to list the additional information they would require to make a referral decision in a category labelled ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

Section Seven was similar to Section Five in that it was open-ended and required a written response. The respondents, in this section were asked to describe a child whom they had referred.

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was piloted at the University of Alberta during summer session with practicing elementary teachers. A variety of changes were made and incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire as a result of the pilot, these are discussed in detail in Chapter III.

The questionnaire, in its revised form, was sent in September to six different school districts for completion. Collection of the questionnaires was done by the principal, approximately two weeks after the teachers' receipt of the questionnaire. Chapter IV details the analysis and results of the responses.

Definition of Terms

Special Needs Children

Alberta Education's categories of special needs children encompasses the mentally, physically, and multiply handicapped; the blind; the deaf; the behaviorally disordered; the language impaired and the gifted. These categories are the basis on which schools in Alberta operate and are funded.

Resource Room

A room equipped with a variety of specialized materials is considered a resource room in rural Alberta. The program in a resource room is usually provided by a teacher specifically dedicated to that position who offers a minimum of three periods a week to qualifying students. The teacher assigned may or may not have had any Special Education training. The program offered is, typically, part-time with the students receiving the bulk of their instruction in the regular class.

Referral

Bailey & Harbin, 1980 defined referral appropriately for the purposes of this study, "A referral indicates a significant problem that is unlikely to be remediated without some form of additional intervention with the teacher or child",(p. 590). This definition was contained as a part of the instructions on the questionnaire.

System-Related Factors

The term system-related factors refers to those factors which are directly related to the Department of Education and/or the School District's interpretation of the Provincial policies and guidelines. These factors also include those services contracted by the School District (e.g. Assessment and Support Services).

School-Related Factors

School-related factors include those factors which are unique to any particular school (e.g. the principal, the resource room program and the resource room teacher etc.).

Teacher-Related Factors

Teacher-related factors refer to the teacher's knowledge, personal attitudes and biases towards a variety of variables.

Limitations

The generalizations which can be made on the basis of the results of this study are limited in several ways:

1. The population sample was limited to Elementary teachers. Elementary teachers were judged to be most likely to make referrals (Nicholson, 1967). Thus, generalization to a non-elementary teacher population must be made with caution.

2. The population sample was also limited to rural teachers due to the unique problems presented by their relative isolation from specialize services. Urban teachers could possibly respond quite differently to both the system-related and school-related statements.

3. All of the cautions accompanying the use of self-report inventories and similar questionnaires applied to these results.

4. Results may have been biased by the relationship of the investigator, as Special Education Coordinator, with the teachers.

5. The results were collected from small schools located in East Central and Central Alberta. Results from other rural Alberta school districts could be different.

Overview of the Study

The remainder of the study is organized in the following way:

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

This chapter provides a summary of the literature along two lines of inquiry which were considered relevant to teachers' referral decisions:

1. Child-dependent Factors
    - a) Gender
    - b) Ethnicity
    - c) Socioeconomic Status
    - d) Attractiveness
    - e) Behavior
    - f) Academic Achievement
2. Child-independent Factors
    - a) System-related
    - b) School-related
    - c) Teacher-related

Chapter III: Methodology

The research design and procedures are discussed in detail.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

The results are reported, analyzed and interpreted in detail.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The conclusions are presented and discussed in relation to the information presented in Chapter II. The apparent implications related to the data gathered on referral practices are discussed. Recommendations for future research are provided.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature pertinent to the study of factors affecting teachers' referral decisions is reviewed in this chapter. The Introduction establishes the basis for the study and reviews the areas of early identification, the teacher as a referral agent and current investigations. This is followed by an in depth examination of the specific areas related to Child-dependent factors and Child-independent factors. A conclusion is provided at the end of the Chapter.

Introduction

Prior to the seventies, the need for early identification of children with special needs was recognized by leaders in the field of Special Education (Dunn, 1963; Cruickshank, 1966). In 1970, after their investigation of the early identification of children with learning disabilities Ferinden, Sherman, & Linden (1970) concluded that, "If children with learning disabilities continue to attend school without being diagnosed and given special attention, they eventually become frustrated and develop negative attitudes toward the learning situation. Such anti-academic attitudes are consequently carried over from grade to grade and often result in emotional difficulties..."(p. 591). Lerner (1971) supports the need for early identification and intervention to prevent "inadequate development of ego functions", (p. 242). Bradley (1975), after screening 1,641 children, concluded that early identification of the learning disabled is crucial and the key to a successful educational program for the child. Both the need for and the potential benefits of early identification have been clearly established.

The literature supports that the most likely person to make a referral is the regular classroom teacher. Permutter & Parus, (1983) studied and compared the diagnostic procedures used by the elementary schools in fourteen different school districts. In all fourteen districts, the majority of initial referrals were reported to have come from teachers. They concluded that in these districts teachers' opinions made-up the primary diagnostic screening device. The districts included in the current investigation are very similar in this aspect.

Keogh et al. (1974) point out that the analyses of referral patterns of children for psychoeducational evaluation have clearly shown that most referrals originate with classroom teachers. Becker & Snider (1979) concur with Keogh et al. that the classroom teacher has a key role in the initial identification of special needs children. Nicholoson, (1967) in his survey of 590 Ohio school districts found that 73 percent of all referrals were teacher-initiated referrals and that 93 percent of the referrals were from school personnel (e.g. guidance counsellors, principals, school nurses).

In summary, the most likely person to make the referral, without which all services are precluded and the child's needs are left not met, is the teacher. The teacher "has an unequaled perspective for appraising inappropriate or deviant behaviors. She is the first professional to observe and compare a child with his peers over any period of time", (p. 367, Keogh, 1974).

Although the need for early identification has been established and the elementary classroom teacher appears to be a good source of referral, some teachers fail to make referrals year after year, while other teachers consistently make inappropriate referrals. The making of inappropriate referrals and/or the failure to make appropriate referrals is a very dangerous practice as research has proven (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981; Foster et al., 1984). Once a child has been referred the chances of placement are extremely high. A variety of reasons may be responsible for the dilemma faced by teachers when making the referral decision (White & Calhoun, 1987).

Marston, Mirkin & Deno (1984) investigated an alternative to traditional screening, referral and identification of special needs children. They list four factors which were instrumental in motivating their search for an alternative. First, the referral being initially biased due to student characteristics (e.g. gender, socioeconomic status, physical attractiveness). Second and third, the referral rate being biased by institutional constraints, (e.g. amount of paper work, perceived competence of the person receiving the referral, material resources, etc.), and external pressures (e.g. financial climate, state guidelines, parental pressure, etc.). Fourth, the placement-team practices as a result of the referral, being biased by the information provided by the teacher. Marston et al. contrasted a curriculum-based referral procedure with the traditional teacher-referral procedure and found; similar numbers of students referred, a more equal distribution of males and females, that behavior definitely influenced teachers' referral decisions about females, and that the traditional referrals were treated much differently than curriculum-based referrals. Of the children referred through traditional procedures in the Marston et al. study, sixty-four percent were labelled learning disabled by the assessment team for reasons other than those stated in the learning disabilities guidelines. Thus, the initial referral decision is of paramount importance in light of its potential consequences.

Christenson et al. (1982) speculated that student and teacher characteristics interact with each other and other factors to influence teachers' referral decisions. Fifty-two teachers were asked to list barriers to and factors facilitating the referral process in their districts. The results indicated that the teachers' perceived five institutional constraints; organizational factors, availability of services, hassle, teacher variables, attitudinal factors and four external pressures; external agency influences, federal and state guidelines, parental pressures, socio-political climate, as influencing their referral decisions. Unfortunately, Christenson et al. (1982) did not clearly report their findings with regard to the facilitating factors all those factors reported tended to be barriers to referral. However, it would be interesting to discover if the teachers in the current investigation express similar concerns.

The literature suggests that both child-dependent and child-independent factors are worthy of investigation when examining teachers' referral decisions. The literature review encompasses the Child-dependent variables of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical attractiveness, behavior and academic achievement; and the Child-independent variables related to the Provincial Department of Education, the School District, the school and the teacher. The balance of the Chapter is concerned with an extensive examination of each of the variables and the veracity of their inclusion in the present investigation.

Child-dependent Variables

"Attitudes and decisions about children have shown to be influenced by a wide variety of child characteristics" (Ysseldyke, 1979). The child-dependent variables included as a part of this study will be limited to those about which there continues to be some question and/or those which appear to predispose a child to referral.

Unfortunately, each of the child-dependent characteristics reviewed did not appear in isolation in the research literature, often child-dependent characteristics were reported as interacting with each other to produce an effect. The studies reviewed were loosely grouped under specific headings; however, several of the studies could have appeared under more than one heading.

Gender

Nicholoson, (1967) found that of the children referred from 590 Ohio school districts 69 percent were male, an overall ratio of more than two to one. Further, he found the ratio fairly consistent regardless of the reason for referral (e.g. academic deficiencies, emotional reactions, family problems).

Jackson & Lahadern, (1967) reporting on their observations of 126 children in four sixth-grade classrooms found that gender made a difference in all four classrooms but that the degree of difference varied between classrooms. Teachers had different attitudes toward male and female children, girls were perceived as more able to benefit from continued placement in the regular class. Boys, as a group, were found to have eight to ten times more trouble with school as measured by the number of "control messages" they received. Jackson & Lahadern conclude that the experience of going to school is clearly very different for boys than girls.

Brophy & Good, (1970) in their study of teachers' communication of differential expectations for children's classroom performance found that boys had more verbal interactions with their teachers than did girls. Boys in this study had significantly more disapproval contacts with teachers than did girls. The authors suggested that in this case the teachers were not necessarily biased against the boys but rather that gender was interacting with behavior to produce the high number of teacher-boy contacts.

Finn (1972), in his study of teachers' expectations and the educational environment, found that the students' gender influenced the teachers' expectations. However, the differential expectations by teachers based on gender were limited to only Caucasian students. No gender distinctions were made for the Negro students, indicating that in some cases gender and race may have been interacting.

Lietz & Gregory, (1978) studied the determinants of pupil gender and race as related to referrals to the office to see the principal and referrals to determine the need for special education. The population studied was composed of 416 students; 188 Blacks, 209 Caucasians, and 19 from Other Ethnic Backgrounds. Forty-six percent of all Blacks, thirty-five percent of all Caucasians and sixty-three percent of Other Ethnic Backgrounds were referred either to the office and/or for educational assessment. A, more in-depth, breakdown of the figures indicated that significantly more Blacks were referred to the office as a form of punishment for non-performance than Caucasians when educational assessment would have been more appropriate. However, Lietz & Gregory concluded that race was not as powerful a factor as gender, "maleness is far more critical in determining misbehavior (leading to referral) than racial identity" (p.65).

Recently, Woolrich & Richman (1985) investigated teachers' choice of punishment as a function of a students' gender, age, race, and IQ level. After surveying 216 teachers they concluded that the students' gender continues to be a potent factor influencing teachers' decisions. Much severer punishment was recommended for males than females, however, within the male group the harshest punishments were awarded to the Caucasian males. These findings concur with Pollard's (1979) that teachers are more likely to make gender distinctions among Caucasian than Black students. It was speculated that the reason for the teachers' lack of gender distinction among Blacks is that overall, less is expected of Blacks indicating the teachers' racial bias.

Evidence that a students' gender influences teachers' referral decisions as well as teacher expectations (Mason, 1973) has continuously emerged in the research literature throughout the past four decades. Some of the more recent literature indicates that a combination of child-dependent characteristics may be interacting to predispose a child to referral.

Ethnicity (Race)

As reported in previously cited studies, ethnicity also appears to emerge as a factor which may be influencing teachers' referral decisions. Garcia's (1982) definition of ethnicity "values, perceptions, feelings, assumptions and physical characteristics associated with ethnic group affiliation or membership"(p. 139), appears sufficient for use in the current investigation. Garcia elaborates and explains that ethnicity refers to "one's sense of time and space" which is also relevant to the ethnic groups being investigated.

Studies of race in the United States will be included in this section; however, caution must be used in generalizing American results regarding Blacks, Mexican-

Americans or Hispanic to Canadian minority populations, particularly, because of their respective historical backgrounds. The studies are included only to support the premise that ethnicity may be a factor currently influencing rural Alberta teachers' referral decisions. The reader must also keep in mind that referrals do not necessarily indicate bias against a group; referrals could also be considered as bias in favor of a group so that its members receive the services they require to perform successfully, (Tobias & Zibrin, 1983).

Zucker & Prieto, (1977) studied teacher bias in the making of educational decisions. The two variables of gender and ethnicity were presented to 280 teachers in the form of identical case studies. Ethnicity in this study was limited to Mexican-American children. Gender was not found to be a determining factor which influenced the teachers' hypothetical decisions to place a child, nor was gender interacting with ethnicity found to be a determining factor. Ethnicity alone appeared to be the prime factor leading to the differential treatment and placement of students. Teachers indicated that Mexican-American children would benefit from special class placement while Caucasian children with the same case histories could remain in the regular class.

Tucker, (1980) conducted a longitudinal study over eight years of fifty school districts involving a student population of approximately 40,000 children. He proposes and his statistics support that, as classes for the learning disabled became available, in addition to special classes for the mentally handicapped, the proportion of Blacks and Mexican-Americans filling these classes was inordinately high in comparison to Caucasians. He concludes that the legislation, aimed at controlling racial discrimination with respect to special class placements as a result of ethnicity, has not decreased the numbers of minority group children in special classes. He proposes that the schools have merely found an alternate placement in the classes for the learning disabled for children towards which they are ethnically biased.

Rubovits & Maehr, (1973) in an often quoted study, found that teachers exhibited a negative pattern of interaction towards Black students, even though the students had been placed in a gifted class. In this study, Black students were given less attention, ignored more, praised less and criticized more than Caucasians. The students in this study definitely suffered the effects of teacher bias due to their ethnicity.

Tobias et al. (1982) in their survey of 199 teachers of varying backgrounds found no differences in referral recommendations which could be solely attributed to the students' ethnicity as presented in a case study. They did, however, conclude that teachers' were more likely to refer children of ethnic backgrounds other than their own. In a follow-up study conducted the following year Tobias & Zibrin (1983) were unable to replicate their previous findings. This study included 362 teachers who were asked if they would refer a ten-year old boy/girl, who was two years below grade level and had a variety of behavioral difficulties. In this study no differences attributable to students' gender or ethnicity alone were evidenced. However, the teachers' ethnicity interacting with the students' gender appeared to be a significant factor. Black and Caucasian teachers recommended more males for referral and Hispanic teachers recommended more females.

Giesbrecht & Routh, (1979) researched the effects of cumulative folder information on teachers' referrals of low-achieving children. One-hundred and four Elementary teachers examined the folders. The results indicated an interaction between ethnicity and parents' education, Blacks with well-educated parents were considered less in need of referral than Caucasians of well-educated parents. Children with negative behavioral comments were also considered more in need of referral. The authors concluded that while the assessment personnel perceive a referral and subsequent placement of a child as beneficial to the child the teachers, perhaps, tend to consider a referral and subsequent placement as a means of removing the child from their classroom.

Argulewicz & Sanchez, (1983) examined the referral rates over two years from a school population of 9,950 elementary students. Their study was aimed at determining whether a socioeconomic and/or ethnicity bias existed in, (a) teachers' referrals, and (b) placement decisions. Their findings suggested that teachers' referred significantly higher proportions of children with low socioeconomic status from non-English speaking backgrounds. Argulewicz (1983) in a subsequent article claims that, in fact, the assessment team moderated the effect of the teachers' referrals and prevented many children from being misplaced due to teacher bias related to ethnicity and its interaction with socioeconomic status.

Richmond & Waits, (1978) analyzed 335 pupil referrals made by classroom teachers in their investigation to determine the kinds of problems teachers' perceived as warranting a referral. Of the 335 students referred sixty percent were Caucasian and forty percent were Black, this finding was unexpected as it reflected a higher percentage of Black referrals than would be indicated from the percentages represented in the population. Fewer Caucasian females were referred than expected indicating a possible bias of ethnicity. Of the Blacks referred a statistically significant high number of males were referred for behavioral problems as opposed to academic problems which suggests that ethnicity, gender, and behavior may be interacting to produce referrals. In this study the students' socioeconomic status was not a factor which emerged as having any significance.

Greenbaum, (1985) comparing the communication patterns of Native children in elementary classrooms to that of Anglo children found significant differences in behavior and communication. Native children interrupted the teacher more often and spent more time gazing at peers when the teacher was talking than did Caucasian children. Greenbaum speculates that teachers may be perceiving Native students as "inattentive, laconic and dull-witted," perceptions which often lead a teacher to refer students.

In one of the few Canadian studies involving ethnicity, Herbert et al. (1984) found that teachers-in-training were most powerfully influenced by the combination of gender and ethnicity. The study conducted in Saskatchewan, included 160 teachers-in-training who were asked to make a hypothetical placement decision based on a psychoeducational report of a Native and non-Native child. Caucasian females and Native male students were rated as significantly less likely to be Learning Disabled than Caucasian male students. Caucasian female students presenting behavioral problems were rated as significantly less likely to be appropriately classified as mentally retarded than Native male students with academic problems. These findings and others (e.g. Hemingway and Hutchinson, 1983) indicate a teacher bias towards Native children which may be unique to Western Canada.

Overall, the literature appears to support the further investigation of ethnicity and its effects on teachers' referral decisions.

Attractiveness

Salvia et al., (1977) investigated attractiveness as related to school achievement. They concluded that teachers hold different expectancies for attractive and unattractive children. Attractive children, in general, received higher report card marks from teachers. When the effects of achievement were controlled attractive children were still awarded significantly higher marks by their teachers. The data indicated that a teacher bias towards attractive and against unattractive children may have been operating even after 180 days or an entire school year.

Clifford & Walster, (1973) designed an experiment to determine the effect of students' physical attractiveness on teachers' expectations of the students' intellectual and social behavior. A package, containing a photograph, report card and letter explaining the study was circulated to 404 Elementary school teachers. The teachers' responses indicated that attractive children have a distinct advantage over unattractive children due to teacher bias. Attractive children were thought to possess higher intelligence, higher educational potential and to have better peer relations than unattractive children. The gender of the student did not affect the teachers' perception of intelligence, nor did gender and attractiveness interact to produce any effect. Attractiveness alone appeared to be biasing the teachers' judgments. The authors suggest that the results of this experiment be made available to parents to enable them to use this particular teacher bias to their children's advantage.

Ross & Salvia, (1975) investigated attractiveness as a biasing factor in teacher judgments. The study included 76 experienced Elementary teachers in sixteen different schools. Their findings regarding gender and gender interacting with attractiveness confirmed those of Clifford & Walster (1973), neither was of any significance in teachers' judgments. However; the teachers, clearly, felt that the unattractive children had lower intellectual functioning, would experience more difficulty with peer relationships would be lower-achieving children and would be more appropriately placed in special classes than their more attractive peers.

Adams & Cohen, (1974) investigated children's physical appearance and interpersonal characteristics and their affects on teachers. They concluded that, initially, the children's physical appearance had a greater influence on student-teacher interactions than did their interpersonal skills.

A student's physical appearance and/or attractiveness appears to be a factor which has influenced teachers' decisions in the past. Part of the current investigation will attempt to determine if teacher bias regarding attractiveness is related to their referral decisions.

Socioeconomic Status

Rist, (1970) studied the relationship of teachers' expectations of potential academic performance to the socioeconomic status of students. He found that teachers actively discriminated against children of lower socioeconomic status. These children were ignored more, taught less, punished more and segregated both academically and socially from the children of higher socioeconomic status. He found that teachers assumed the higher the child's socioeconomic status the higher his/her intelligence. The children observed in his study were, "informed in numerous ways of their lower status and were socialized for a role of lower self-expectations" (p. 449).

Bergan & Smith, (1966) conducted a study of the effects of socioeconomic status and gender on teachers' judgments. Seventy-two Elementary teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire rating the attributes of a student who had been described. Bergan & Smith found no differences based on gender. The child's socioeconomic status appeared to be the important variable in determining teachers' judgments of student competence. Further, they found that mentally handicapped students of lower socioeconomic status were referred for assessment while mentally handicapped students of high socioeconomic status were not referred. Their findings suggest that teachers were more willing to teach children of high socioeconomic status and perceive a referral as a first step in the removal of a child from their class.

Neer et al., (1973) linked socioeconomic bias to the diagnosis of mental retardation. Case studies of children were presented to 31 school psychologists and although there were no apparent differences between the diagnosis of the students of middle and high socioeconomic status, students of low socioeconomic status were significantly more likely to be diagnosed as mentally retarded.

Rubin et al. (1973) reviewed the factors affecting special class placement. The students' intelligence did not appear to be a deciding factor which influenced students' placement in special classes. Children with average intelligence were found in special class placements. In this study, low socioeconomic status was the only factor which differentiated between the children placed in special classes and those retained in the regular stream, even when achievement was held constant. Rubin et al. commented that the "environmental circumstances in which the pupil finds himself may be of at least equal importance in determining educational placement" (p. 297) as either his intelligence and/or level of achievement.

Morrison et al. (1985) in their discussion of system identification of learning disabled children suggest that "lack of fit" between children and their respective social groups may heavily contribute to the likelihood of their referral and subsequent removal from class. However; as Kavale (1980) states, the child of lower socioeconomic status will not in all likelihood be removed to a class for the learning disabled but rather will be placed in a class for the mentally handicapped or the behaviorally disordered. Kavale claims that very few children of lower socioeconomic status can be found in classes for the learning disabled, "the learning disabled child of lower class is ignored in favor of the middle-class learning disabled child", (p.110).

Kealy & McLeod, (1976) investigated the relationship between socioeconomic status and children diagnosed as learning disabled. The study was conducted in Western Canada with a population of 333 elementary students. Their findings indicated that children of lower socioeconomic status had less chance of being diagnosed as learning disabled, which was similar to American findings. The authors conclude that assessment teams, "must guard against the pre-judgement that low achievers in the inner city are common retardates while their cousins in suburban areas are learning disabled", (p.66).

Keogh et al., (1974) found a difference in teachers' referral patterns while investigating teachers' perceptions of educationally, high risk students. Teachers placed in schools with populations of lower socioeconomic status made more referrals than teachers placed in schools with populations of middle or high socioeconomic status. The authors concluded that children of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be referred for assessment than children with higher status.

The variety of studies found in the literature regarding the relationship of socioeconomic status to special needs children support the premise that a student's socioeconomic status may be influencing teachers' referral decisions.

Behavior

Nicholson (1967) in his survey of 590 school district's referrals found that of all the children referred the majority were referred for behavior related concerns. Students' behavior appears to be a very powerful variable related to the probability of referral for further assessment. Nicholson concluded that both behavior and gender, sixty-nine percent of the referrals were male, influenced teachers' referral decisions.

Rubin & Balow (1971) conducted a longitudinal study focused on learning and behavior disorders. The study included 967 elementary children. Their findings suggested that "schools and teachers are oriented to a narrow band of expected pupil behaviors",(p. 296). Pupils found to be outside of the band of expected behaviors were perceived by teachers as requiring special attention unavailable in the regular class and were therefore more often referred.

Robbins, Mercer, & Meyers (1967) examined the referrals for Central Office assistance. The study took place over one year, during which time 1,231 referrals were made. Neither gender nor socioeconomic status appeared to be factors. The rate of referral for problem behaviors was higher than for any other reason and accounted for forty percent of all referrals. Of the problem behaviors, acting-out behaviors presented as the most frequent reason for referral.

Hutton (1985) reviewed the reasons given by teachers for their referrals. None of the five school districts which employed the teachers had their own full time psychologist. Of the 215 referrals received, 74 percent were boys and 60 percent were Caucasian, neither of these findings were unexpected. The majority of the reasons given by the teachers for referral were behavioral rather than academic.

Schlosser & Algozzine (1979) attempted to determine whether teachers found a difference based on the child's gender related to disruptive behavior. They found that those behaviors more characteristic of boys were viewed as more bothersome by most teachers than were the behaviors characteristic of girls. Thus, the authors suggested an interaction between gender and behavior which may cause a teacher to refer disruptive boys as opposed to girls.

LaVoie & Adams (1974) investigated the effects of physical attractiveness, gender, and conduct of a child on teacher expectations. Four-hundred and four Elementary school teachers received a student progress report with a color photograph of the child. Their findings indicated that the teachers were influenced more by the conduct level of the child than the child's physical attractiveness. Poor conduct girls were rated as more intelligent than passive quiet girls. The passive girl was not viewed as possessing the intellectual capacity of the girl who was more assertive and less self-controlling. However, the good conduct student of either gender was found to be valued, rewarded highly, and treated differentially by the teachers. The authors concluded that while the teachers' initial evaluation was based on external observable cues such as gender, race, and physical attractiveness,

" as teachers interact with students over a period of time such factors as conduct, become more influential in teacher evaluation because these factors are given greater weight in the teachers' cognitive system" (p.130).

Coleman & Gilliam (1983) surveyed 139 teachers' attitudes towards a variety of student behaviors. They found that different types of behavior were differentially disturbing to teachers. The teachers' least negative attitude was towards those children who were experiencing difficulty interacting with peers. The teachers' most negative attitude was towards children who because of their behaviors required an excess of teacher time and energy. Children who did not require the teachers' time or energy were either viewed positively or indifferently by the teachers. These findings indicated that teachers do not want to deal with children with behavior problems and these are the children most likely to be referred.

Morrison et al. (1985) reviewing the literature related to referrals of learning disabled children found behavior highly related to referral. They suggested that learning disabled children often have behavior and attention difficulties which are primarily responsible for the referral, as opposed to the teachers' recognition of the child suffering from a potential learning disability.

The reporting of behavior problems by teachers is common. Ysseldyke et al. (1982) surveyed 105 teachers, each of who had recently referred an elementary student. Analysis of the responses to his survey indicated that teachers offer general, highly variable and subjective reasons for initiating referrals, and in a majority of cases the deciding factor to make the referral was related to the child's behavior, and the referral was made with the intention of excluding the child.

Behavior may be one of the primary reasons influencing teachers' referral decisions. A review of the literature supports its inclusion for further investigation.

Academic Achievement

A students' academic achievement, although included in many of the previously cited studies, does not often appear to be influencing teachers' referral decisions (e.g. Robbins et al., 1967). Ysseldyke et al. (1982) found no difference on psycho metric measures between those children classified as learning disabled and those classified as low achievers, they concluded that factors other than achievement are responsible for the classification and/or misclassification of most students.

Helton & Oakland's (1977) study did lend some support for the inclusion of academic achievement when investigating factors affecting teachers' referral decisions. In their investigation of teachers' attitudinal responses to differing characteristics of elementary school students, they found that both gender and academic ability were factors influencing the teachers. They concluded that the child-dependent characteristics of personality, ability, and gender were clearly related to differing teacher attitudes.

Christenson et al. (1982) found that teachers' referrals for academic problems were subject to a biasing influence of student behavior. If the student was well behaved he/she was less likely to be referred.

In a more recent study, Pugach (1985) investigating the limitations of the implementation of federal Special Education policy in the United States found that teachers used the referral process to meet a wide variety of purposes. Fifty-four percent of the teachers referred children for the purpose of securing complementary instruction and wished to retain primary responsibility for the students' program. Sixty-one percent of Elementary teachers were concerned that the student showed normal or above ability but their achievement was below potential. All Elementary teachers in the study cited an area of academic concern when making the initial referral, although the teacher rarely substantiated the academic weakness with objective material. In a follow-up interview with a number of the teachers, Pugach found that teachers reported referring students for multiple rather than single overriding reasons. It is possible, that teachers' believe that the child's academic difficulties are the classroom teachers' responsibility and feel competent in meeting these needs unless the child has additional difficulties.

Conclusion

A review of the literature suggests that a variety of child-dependent characteristics appear to be influential with regard to teachers' attitudes and decisions (Matuszek & Oakland, 1979). Coleman & Gillam (1973) found "The literature replete with studies demonstrating that naturally occurring student characteristics often trigger probalistic expectations or bias in teachers", (p. 121). Evidence to substantiate whether or not the characteristics of gender, ethnicity, attractiveness, socioeconomic status, behavior and/or academic achievement directly influence a teachers' referral decision was inconclusive. The inclusion of a variety child-dependent characteristics for further investigation as potential factors influencing teachers' referral decisions appears to be both necessary and appropriate.

Child-independent Variables

Studies (e.g. Christenson et al., 1982) examined indicate that child-independent variables may be significant with regards to decisions made by teachers to refer and/or not refer a child for further assessment. These variables fall into three categories. The first set of variables relates to the current "state of the art" of Special Education as reflected in the Provincial Department of Education's policies, guidelines and funding practices. The second set of variables relates to those unique to any one school and the services available within that particular building. The third set of variables relates to the teacher as an individual. Each set of variables is discussed in detail.

System-related Factors

Kavale & Nye (1981) after reviewing 307 research studies concluded that the research literature reflects a lack of consensus regarding standard identification criteria. Tucker et al. (1983) after surveying experts in the field of learning disabilities concluded that part of the difficulty teachers have in making referral decisions is related to the difficulty experts have defining learning disabilities. Ysseldyke et al.'s (1982) findings were similar, although a definition and criteria might exist which describe a special needs student; Ysseldyke et al. found that forty percent of the students were missclassified. Shepard & Smith (1983) found sixty percent of the children classified as learning disabled in Colorado failed to meet Colorado State's definition of learning disabled. Morrison et al. (1985) suggest extreme caution when generalizing and interpreting results from any system identified special needs children. Their findings suggest that a student is often classified as having special needs on a variable and inconsistent basis which was more often than not related to situational as opposed to student-related factors. Wilson (1985) found diagnosis and placement decisions to be inconsistent. Let it suffice to say that, the current state of knowledge with respect to special needs categories abounds with diversity, whether this diversity is reflected in Alberta Education's policy and guidelines requires clarification.

Alberta Education has the legislated mandate to administer the provision of education in the Province of Alberta. It is charged with the responsibility of leadership in the area of education and as a result generates policies, guidelines and procedures which individual school districts are required to interpret and implement in order to maintain provincial funding. Special education is block funded on a flat per pupil rate.

In a recent publication, "Program Adequacy in Special Education" (1987) ten different categories of special needs are listed, these include: "deafness, blindness, physical disability, multiple disabilities, severe expressive and/or receptive language delay, severe behavioral disorder, mild mental retardation, moderate mental retardation, severe mental retardation, gifted and talented" (p. 4). Although the term learning disabled does not appear as a distinct category, the learning disabled tend to be found in several of the aforementioned categories. Alberta Education, therefore, has skirted the definitional issue and criteria confusion presented in the research literature by implying a common understanding of each of the special needs categories.

In the "Special Education Manual" (1987) it is stated that "school boards are responsible for: (a) identification, assessment and placement of exceptional students; (b) development and implementation of Individualized Program Plans (IPP) ..." (p. 3). While Alberta Education's intent is, doubtless, to protect and provide for its students, their policies may have an unpredictable influence on teachers' referral decisions.

The Administration and Operation of Programs section states that formal referral procedures are necessary, that referrals be made on the basis of test results and that signed parental permission is a prerequisite to the actual referral. As the "Special Education Manual" is a relatively recent publication, the extent of implementation of its policies by school districts is yet undetermined, however; some relevant research regarding the policies exists.

Algozzine et al. (1982) point out, "Definitions and criteria that serve as the identification/classification/placement decisions are loosely conceived and often difficult to operationalize; more often than not, they are arbitrary 'standards' with political and economic implications" (p.331). Thurlow et al. (1984) found disturbing support for this quotation. Thurlow et al. (1984) surveyed 118 Special Education teachers from 36 states, the teachers were asked to describe the criteria used to place students in their classrooms. The results of the study indicated that forty percent of the teachers working with the students did not know how it was (e.g. the criteria used) that the students were placed in their classes. If the teachers teaching the Special Education classes are unsure of the entrance criteria the teachers referring the children may be equally unsure as to what constitutes an appropriate referral.

However, the teachers' decision to refer a student continues to be the pivotal point of the identification process, (Schlosser, 1979). Pugach (1985) found that teachers reportedly used the referral process to meet a variety of purposes; fifty-four percent wished to secure complementary instruction, nineteen percent wanted additional information to aid in their planning and twenty-seven percent made referrals with the intent of excluding the referred student from further classroom instruction. Furthermore, she found that some teachers only used the referral process for students at the extremes while other teachers referred late in the school year to indicate to upcoming teachers that the student was experiencing difficulty.

Thurlow & Ysseldyke (1982) described the current situation as one in which students are referred in increasing numbers often for reasons less to do with the students' classroom functioning than the teacher, school-system and other variables.

Graden et al.(1985) recognized the dilemma facing the regular classroom teacher regarding referrals. They successfully designed and implemented a model of prereferral intervention to reduce inappropriate referrals for testing. They found that prior to their intervention the referrals received from teachers appeared to reflect system-level and school-level problems. In contrast, Alberta Education appears to have chosen a referral process based on standardized testing.

The resource room program model is the most widely used delivery system in North America (Friend & McNutt, 1987) and in Alberta. Sabatino (1971) lends his support to this model claiming that the special needs children in his study benefited from this alternate form of education. Sindelar & Deno (1978) reviewed seventeen studies of resource room programs and their effects. Their findings indicate that the academic achievement of the children in these programs improved. Some research in the Eighties draws different conclusions (Adelman & Taylor; Ito, 1980).

McNutt & Friend (1985) studied the status of the resource room model. Most of the resource room programs were multicategorical, and few specifications concerning the services offered through resource room programs existed. A majority of teachers running the resource room programs had no job description. At a systems level no information appeared to exist related to a per pupil cost of resource room programs. McNutt & Friend concluded that there is a tremendous amount of vagueness surrounding the resource room teacher and program.

Reynolds et al. (1987) call for an entire restructuring of Special Education, beginning with the referral which they found, because of the time and energy devoted to the determination of eligibility, an especially costly and ineffective use of resources. Alberta Education neither supports nor denounces the use of the resource room model, nor does it specify criteria for entrance but leaves these decisions to the discretion of local school districts.

Alberta Education does require the development and implementation of Individualized Program Plans (IPPs). Meyan & Moran (1979) studied the effects of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) process on teachers' referrals. They found a significant drop in the referral rate took place because of teacher reluctance to get involved in the IEP process.

In a two-year follow-up study on teachers' attitudes towards IEP's Morgan & Rhode (1980) surveyed 275 teachers. Both in 1978 and 1980 they found that teachers had a moderately negative attitude towards IEP's and found them too time consuming. On the whole, teachers did not view the IEP as "a guide to facilitate the planning, delivery and evaluation of instruction to exceptional children" (Morgan &

Rhode, 1980, p. 66) but rather as an administrative task which was somewhat irrelevant to the child's instruction. Thus, it appears reasonable to speculate that if a teacher suspects that by making a referral he/she will have to become involved in the IEP process, a time consuming process with little perceived benefit for the teacher or child, fewer referrals may be made.

In a more recent study, Dudley-Marlins (1985) further investigated teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of IEP's. His study included 150 Elementary and Secondary teachers located in both rural and urban areas. Overall, the teachers' perceived the IEP process as "fostering interdisciplinary planning" but felt that it was probably not worth the effort. He concluded that the IEP has failed to become a document that influences the child's program on a day-to-day basis.

In summary, Alberta Education's current policies may well include factors which affect teachers' referral decisions. School district's implementation of these policies may further influence the classroom teacher. An attempt will be made in this study to gather information related to teachers' knowledge of and/or reactions to these new policies.

School-Level Factors

The literature appears to support the premise that some factors affecting teachers' referral decisions are school related. Factors reviewed in this section include the principal's attitude, teacher cooperation, and other school based influences.

Robbins et al. (1967) studied the referral rates among schools in one California district. They found that the principal's attitude towards referrals accounted for the variability in numbers of referrals from the respective schools. Additionally, they found an interaction between the size of the school and school psychologist's time; the larger the school and the more psychologist's time the higher the referral rate. Thus, it appears that child-independent factors were responsible for the differences in referral rates. Their findings suggested that children might not have been referred for reasons related to the principal's personality and the school district's economics.

Goupil & Brunet (1984) investigating attitudes and behaviors towards mainstreaming found that the school principal was an extremely important person in the process of referral. His attitude towards children with special needs had a direct influence on teachers' referral patterns. One suggestion presented as a result of the study was that teachers be permitted to refer students directly to psychologists. Legislation in Alberta requires that the principal have prior knowledge of any referral made to specialists, with the only exception being related to cases of suspected abuse.

Another factor influencing teachers' referral decisions might be the resultant consequences of the referral, which in most cases is a Special Education placement (Ysseldyke et al., 1983). The teacher may be faced with being involved with other teachers and/or members of an interdisciplinary team as a result of the referral.

In a study conducted by Fine (1967), the findings indicated that Special Education teachers were less academically demanding than regular class teachers. The Special Education teachers in his study tended to place more emphasis on the student's personal and social adjustment than did the regular class teachers. Regular class and Special class teachers were not in agreement regarding instructional priorities.

Heffernan (1983) found that perceptions of the resource room teachers' role held by different school personnel differed significantly. The principals, classroom teachers and resource room teachers all perceived the role of the resource room teacher differently. In addition, she found conflict between the resource room and classroom teachers regarding planning and organization of the student's instructional program.

Margalit & Mairance (1983) found that the levels of interaction between classroom teachers and resource room teachers were positively related to the overall improvement of the children. In a later study, Margalit (1985) found that the perceptions of the resource room teacher and the credibility of the program offered were both significant factors with respect to the classroom teachers' attitudes. She concludes that communication and cooperation between the resource room teacher and regular classroom teacher directly affects the child's academic progress. She suggested that school systems consider personality factors when hiring resource room teachers.

Christenson et al. (1982) investigated the institutional constraints and external pressures influencing teachers' referral decisions. A variety of factors appeared to be significant including; the perceived competence of the person receiving the referral, the kind of referral form used, the amount of paper work involved, the teachers' attitudes and the teachers' theoretical beliefs. They concluded that teachers' referral decisions for academic problems are subject to a biasing influence of student behavior. They suggest that this problem could be resolved by direct repeated evaluation prior to referral.

Smith et al.(1986) investigating labelling theory as applied to learning disabilities examined the perceptions of principals, special education teachers, school officials and parents. They found that parents exerted influence on school officials to alter their child's placement even in the face of overwhelming evidence by professionals that such a change was inappropriate. Furthermore, they found that school personnel strongly indicated that a great many learning disabilities were due to homelife and parent problems. They concluded that there is "overwhelming evidence that school personnel frequently violate official criteria as to what determines a learning disability and that consequently the term learning disability (at the school level) has become a catchall for all types of student problems" (p. 200).

Teacher-related Factors

There is an abundance of information in the literature regarding teacher bias (Salvia et al., 1977). Beyond child related factors, previously discussed, other factors directly related to the individual teacher emerged as relevant to their referral decisions.

Studies indicate that the teachers responsible for making the referral decisions may lack the knowledge and training to do so. Algozzine et al. (1982) found that teachers with little or no training in special education were asked to make judgments and assessments of special needs children. Another finding which emerged from this study indicated that the "human diagnostician" does not give equal weight to all the information about the child and in fact still found the child in need of special services despite varying amounts of data confirming normalcy.

Brophy & Rohrkemper (1981) investigated the influence of perceived problem ownership on teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Their data raise questions about teacher preparedness to cope with a student with special needs.

Smart et al. (1980) report the exploratory findings of a study of teacher factors and special class placement in New Zealand. They found that the child's need (low IQ) did not differentiate between teachers who made referrals and teachers who did not make referrals. Neither class size nor the principal's attitude appeared to be factors affecting the referral. The non-referring teachers in this study tended to be younger, married, parents with better academic qualifications, who believed themselves to be more competent and were more in favor of mainstreaming than the referring teachers. The authors conceded that there may have been other differences between the two sets of teachers which were left unexplored due to the limitations of their study. The authors reminded the reader that the teacher's attitudes may change as a function of time.

Siperstien & Goding (1985) found that more important than the teachers' attitude towards special needs children were their behaviors. Teachers in this study had a higher quantity of contact with special needs students but the quality of the contact was negative. They concluded that teachers, as a whole, wanted firm constant control and structure; which did not easily lend itself to meeting the needs of special needs children.

McKinney & Feagans (1984) investigated the student's temperament and its impact on decisions by teachers. They found a difference between the classroom teachers and the resource room teachers' rating of students. Classroom teachers tended to rate special needs students as less able, less motivated, less task oriented and less reactive than did the resource room teachers. The authors stated that the regular classroom teacher may experience reduced perceptions of professional competence and self-regard as a result of being involved with a special needs student.

Harris & Mahar's (1975) study revealed that classroom teachers were possessive of their students, defensive about their teaching and unwilling to expand beyond their traditional routines. The interpersonal relations and cooperation between the resource teacher and the classroom teacher regarding rights to child management, grading, and discipline were also factors in the study.

Gutkin & Bossard (1984) found that teachers' years of experience affected their desire for consultive services. The more years a teacher taught the less likely he/she was to want consultive services. In an earlier study, Gutkin et al.(1980) found no significant difference in the teachers' preferences for consultive services related to the students' need.

Conclusion

Teachers are the primary referral agents of children with special needs. If educators intend to meet the needs of these children, they must first address the referral process. To date, little attention has been directly focused on the actual decision-to-refer (Pugach, 1985), a decision made by the classroom teacher on a day-to-day basis. The dynamics of the referral process are complex.

Factors which may be involved in the referral decision were grouped into two categories, child-dependent factors and child-independent factors. The child-dependent factors reflected child characteristics to which teachers might exhibit bias. The child-independent factors were further grouped into three sub-categories including system-related, school-related and teacher-related factors. All categories and sub-categories were supported in the literature as relevant to the current investigation.

The purpose of this study was to build on the foundation of the existing knowledge in the area of teacher referral. All studies, previously cited, were judged to have some relevance either through their conclusions and/or implications. The breadth and nature of the topic is extensive. It was the intention of the study to develop an instrument founded in the research literature to determine which of the factors and/or combination of factors were significant with respect to rural Alberta teachers' referral decisions. The information gathered may prove useful in planning strategies for change, strategies that not only result in better meeting the needs of students but also in better meeting the needs of the teachers in terms of knowledge about effective referrals and the support needs of the students in their classes.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in depth the subjects, the sample selection, the design of the instrument, the pilot study, the main study, and the data analysis.

This is a descriptive exploratory study aimed at gathering information related to teachers' referral decisions. An instrument was developed, piloted, and revised to meet the needs of the current investigation, as one was not available elsewhere. The content of the instrument relied heavily on factors found to be significant in the research literature. A limited number of additional factors suggested by professionals in the field of both regular and Special Education were included.

Subjects

Seventy Elementary school teachers from six rural school districts (1 Public and 5 Catholic) located in East Central and Central Alberta were asked to assist in the investigation into factors affecting teachers' referral decisions. The respondents years of teaching experience and teacher training were variable. The gender of the respondents was predominately female. The ages of the respondents ranged from the mid-twenties to the mid-sixties. Division I (Grades 1, 2 & 3) and Division II (Grades 4, 5 & 6) were expected to be fairly equally represented.

Sample Selection

The sample participating in this study was limited to teachers teaching in small schools in rural areas, due to the uniqueness of their situation. Psychological services to all districts involved were limited and provided on a part-time contract basis only. Other school support services in each community were similar. All teachers had access, through their Principals and/or Central Office administration, to referrals of children to mental health services, social services, speech therapy and/or public health. No dedicated in-school counselling services were available in any of the schools. In all but the Public school, the resource room program was the only form of alternate Special Education offered. The public school had an enclosed Opportunity room for children classified as low Educably mentally handicapped, Trainably mentally handicapped, and Dependent mentally handicapped. Children in this class ranged in age from five to fourteen years.

The resource room program in all schools was multicategorical; children with low intelligence, physical handicaps, learning disabilities, language delays etc. were served through the resource program. The resource room programs in these schools operated on a part-time basis, that is, no child was offered a full-time program in the resource room. All children attending resource room programs attended a minimum three periods a week or more, a few children were being offered half-time programs in the resource room due to the nature of their disabilities. Each child in the resource room had an IPP to guide their program in the resource room, the IPP did not, necessarily, extend into the regular class.

All of the teachers providing service in the resource rooms with the exception of one teacher had several years of classroom teaching experience. None of the resource room teachers, with the exception of the one with no classroom experience had any direct training other than inservices in the field of special education.

Designing the Research Instrument

After a thorough examination of the literature, it was resolved that a multifaceted approach was required to determine the effects of the multifaceted question; what factors and/or combination of factors affect teachers' referral decisions. The instrument to be developed needed to be comprehensive enough to gather data on; the individual respondents and their attitudes and beliefs, the respondents' perceptions of system and school related factors, the respondents' pattern of referral decisions and the type of child that the respondent had actually referred.

The original instrument was designed to have seven sections. Section One required the respondent to check-off personal information regarding education, experience and current employment situation. Section One consisted of five questions.

Sections Two, Three and Four contained sixty-six Likert-type questions. The respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of One to Five the extent of their agreement with each of the statements. The statements were related to their own bias, knowledge, and perceptions of system-level and school-level factors. The questions were designed in opposing pairs requiring the respondents, if responding consistently, to use both ends of the scale.

Section Five of the instrument was based on Christenson et al.'s (1982) study. The respondents were asked to list their perceptions of barriers to and factors which facilitated referrals. No further guidance was given in this section, enabling respondents the freedom to comment on all levels related to referrals.

Section Six was comprised of sixteen vignettes. Vignettes have been successfully employed in previous studies (e.g. Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981) to glean information regarding teachers' referral decisions. The vignettes were used exclusively to determine the effects of child-dependent characteristics on teachers' referral decisions. The children described in the vignettes were all based on actual referrals as opposed to hypothetical case studies. In Section Four, the respondents were asked to make a referral decision of; YES refer, NO do not refer, or to state the ADDITIONAL INFORMATION they would require to make a referral decision.

Section Seven was similar to Section Five in that the respondents were asked for an unguided written response. In this section, the respondents were asked to describe a child that they had actually referred.

Pilot Study

A copy of the instrument used for the pilot study is provided in an Appendix A. The instrument developed was piloted with the cooperation of ten practicing Elementary school teachers. The pilot was conducted at the University of Alberta during summer school classes. A majority of the respondents were interviewed following the completion of the instrument. The interview provided information regarding improvements and/or changes which they felt would enhance the presentation, quality, readability, and/or clarity of the instrument.

Results of the Pilot Study

Detailed results of the pilot were provided in Appendix B. Some format changes were made to improve the overall presentation of the instrument. Two additional questions were added to the first section of the instrument as a result of the pilot study. One was directly related to one of the Likert-type questions regarding Individualized Program Plans. Another question was added due to the similarity of training between Special Education and Early Childhood Education. This brought the total number of questions in this section to seven.

With regards to Section Two of the instrument, a consistent comment made during the follow-up interviews was that this section was too long and contained too many repetitive questions. As a result of these comments and the actual responses of the teachers in the pilot, Section Two was shortened from 66 to 43 questions, leaving only ten duplicating questions to maintain the content validity of this section. Questions were re-ordered and re-numbered. Minor changes in the wording of some of the questions were made to improve clarity. The word "not" was underlined in all questions.

No difficulties were found during the pilot study with Section Three. Although not all the teachers in the pilot study responded to both parts of this section, the interviews conducted afterwards revealed that these particular teachers did not perceive any barriers and/or facilitating factors.

Some respondents experienced difficulty understanding a part of the directions provided for the vignettes in Section Four. These instructions were revised in the final version of the instrument. Minimal changes were made in the wording of a few of the vignettes.

The fifth section of the instrument, although not completed by all respondents provided interesting insights into the nature of a student referred by the teachers in the past. This section will remain unchanged in the final version.

Procedure of the Main Study

A cover letter addressed to the teachers was written and is contained in Appendix D. The cover letter and the instrument in its final form was taken to the Superintendents of the respective school districts involved for final approval and permission for distribution.

Principals in each school were asked to lend their cooperation to the study by collecting the instruments and checking-off the respondents name on a staff list. Using this procedure the confidentiality of the respondents was ensured.

The instruments were distributed to the teachers in the month of September. Teachers were asked to have them completed within the following two weeks. After the two week period, two follow-ups were done to acquire additional outstanding instruments.

A small sample of teachers was personally interviewed on an informal basis after completing the instrument. The purpose of the interview was to gain any additional information not encompassed within the limitations of the instrument (e.g. a previous negative referral experience).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed from a number of different perspectives to determine which factors or combination of factors significantly affected teachers' referral decisions. Statistical analysis was conducted to attain chi-square levels of significance between the seven variables in Section I and the 43 questions in

Section II. A further chi-square analysis of significance was conducted between the seven variables in Section I and the sixteen vignettes in Section IV.

The results and interpretation of the data collected are discussed in detail in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Factors related to teachers' referral decisions were investigated through the use of a newly developed survey instrument. This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected in this study. The factors under investigation had, previously, been divided into four groups; system-related factors, school-related factors, teacher-related factors and child-related factors. Although the study was initially designed as a descriptive study, some statistical analysis of the data was done to provide additional information regarding the individual choices made by specific groups of the respondents. Follow-up interviews with a small group of respondents was also done after the initial survey results were collated. The analysis presented in this chapter includes the survey results as well as data collected in follow-up interviews. Some research questions were answered on the basis of a five-point Likert-type scale, others through the use of vignettes and a third group consisted of open-ended questions. Distribution of surveys was limited to rural elementary teachers.

Perhaps the most interesting results were found in those cases where both the questionnaires and the follow-up interviews targeted the same research question. In such cases, there was not only the closed objective questionnaire data but also the relatively open and subjective interview data which provided interesting contrasts as well as different perspectives.

Although the common practice is to present an analysis chapter in the order of the research questions, it was felt that the original grouping of similar questions provided better organization. Thus, analyses are presented in seven major sections.

Overall Data

Seventy questionnaires were distributed at the beginning of September to six rural elementary schools. A total of 43 usable questionnaires were returned for analysis after two follow-ups in person, ending the collection of data in November. Every effort was made to encourage the return of a hundred percent of the questionnaires; however, the return rate was only 61.43 percent.

The 27 unreturned questionnaires were traced back to the two larger schools in the study. In these schools two to four teachers taught at each of the grade levels. In one case the teachers of a particular grade level had responded to the questionnaire as a grade group completing only one questionnaire, in another case one person of the grade group had been given the responsibility of completing a questionnaire while the other teachers did other things. These decisions by the respondents possibly account for approximately ten missing questionnaires.

Individual respondents were not pursued personally but if they approached the researcher, as several did, and volunteered information as to their reason for not responding it was recorded. Of the remaining seventeen unaccounted for questionnaires, one teacher reported that she simply did not know enough to fill it out, another teacher reported a lack of time, another teacher felt it was too difficult to make choices on the vignettes, and another teacher felt there was no point in responding because it would not result in any significant change. The remaining respondents made no comments as to their reasons for not responding.

In summary, the number of returns limits the conclusions and implications which can be drawn from this data. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a small sample of respondents (five) to provide further clarification of specific issues in which the questionnaire results left some doubt as to the conclusions which could be drawn from it. The interview questions may be found in Appendix G.

In the sections of the questionnaire containing Likert-type questions, some questions were worded both positively and negatively, as a check of the consistency of rater response. The results indicated that in most cases the respondents were consistent. Inconsistencies are discussed in detail in the respective sections.

Section I

Teacher Variables

Section I of the questionnaire attempted to gather personal information on the respondents' education and experience with special needs children. It consisted of seven specific questions. The results of each question are given in detail and a summary of the group's profile follows.

Years of Teaching Experience

To address the research question regarding the respondent's teaching experience; the questionnaire asked each teacher to choose one of the three groups: "1 to 3 years, 3 to 10 years, or Over 10 years". The breakdown of the 43 responses is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Sample Population by Teaching Experience

1 to 3 years	3 to 10 years	Over 10 years
18.6%	23.3%	58.1%

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents had more than ten years of teaching experience. Teachers with no previous teaching experience were excluded from the study due to their obvious inexperience with making referrals. The group as a whole tended to be older more experienced teachers.

Average class size

It appears that the majority of respondents did not have excessively large or small numbers of children upon which to make referral decisions. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2

Distribution of Sample Population by Average Class Size

Under 20 students	21-26 students	Over 26 students
23.3 %	55.8 %	20.9 %

Most respondents, 55.8 percent reported their average class size as ranging from 21 to 26 children. Ten respondents, 23.3 percent, reported an average class size of under 20 and nine respondents, 20.9 percent, reported their average class size as over 26.

Number of Referrals

Overall, it appears that the teachers in this study did make referrals on a fairly consistent basis. Table 3 presents the breakdown.

Table 3

Distribution of Sample Population by Average Number of Referrals

No referrals	1-5 referrals	Over 5 referrals
7 %	76.7 %	16.3 %

Only three teachers, 7 percent, in the study reported making no referrals in the past three years. Most teachers, 76.7 percent reported making one to five referrals and seven teachers, 16.3 percent reported making over five in the past three years.

Division Taught

The teachers were asked to report the Division in which they taught, Division I (Grades One to Three), or Division II (Grades Four to Six). Table 4 provides the distribution of teachers.

Table 4

Distribution of Sample Population by Division

Division I	Division II	Other
51.2%	46.5%	2.3%

Of the percentages reported three of the respondents taught both Division I and II, and one teacher taught an enclosed special education class. It appears the results of the study were not biased by differing numbers of respondents from Division I or Division II.

Training in Special Education

The majority of respondents, 48.8 percent, reported no training or inservicing in Special Education. Some 30.2 percent of respondents reported training in Special Education. Nine, 20.9 percent, respondents indicated that they had received inservicing in Special Education. Table 5 represents the findings.

Table 5

Distribution of Sample Population by Special Education Training

Inservice	University Courses	None
20.9 %	30.2 %	48.8 %

Through interviewing it was discovered that some teachers considered any Educational Psychology course as training in Special Education. Follow-up interviews with a sample of respondents indicated that some teachers considered their recent inservicing on the Diagnostic Reading Program, a program designed for regular class children, as Special Education inservicing. The difficulties respondents had with interpretation of this particular question limited its value as an indicator of educational training.

Early Childhood Training

Early Childhood training is similar in many respects to special education training with regards to special needs children. The results with regard to Early Childhood training are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Distribution of Sample Population by Early Childhood Training

Inservice	University Courses	None
9.3 %	34.9 %	55.8 %

The majority or respondents, 55.8 percent, reported no training or inservicing in Early Childhood training. Fifteen respondents, 34.9 percent, reported some University training and 9.3 percent of respondents reported attending inservices about Early Childhood.

Experience with Individualized Program Plans (IPP's)

Table 7 presents a summary of the respondents' experience with Individualized Program Plans.

Table 7

Distribution of Sample Population by IPP Experience

Some	None
72.1 %	27.9 %

The majority of respondents, 72.1 percent, reported experience with children on Individualized Program Plans. Their experience may have been limited to a child being served in the resource room whose resource room program only,was guided by an IPP. The extent of teacher involvement in many cases in the schools involved was limited to the regular classroom teacher modifying the evaluation of the student's performance because of the time spent in the resource room. Twelve of the 43 respondents, 27.9 percent, reported no experience with children on Individualized Program Plans.

Summary

The respondents in the study tended to be older more experienced teachers with average class sizes. A large majority had made referrals in the past. The number of respondents representing Division I and Division II was considered balanced. No definitive conclusions were drawn as to the specialized education and/or training of the respondents due to the apparent difficulty with interpretation of these questions by the respondents; however, the majority of the sample had no training in either Special Education or Early Childhood. Most respondents reported some experience with special needs students whose program was being partially or fully guided by an Individualized Program Plan. Clearly, the questions regarding Special Education and Early Childhood training, and teacher experience with IPP's need to be more specifically worded in any future endeavor

Section II

System-Level Factors

Section II attempted to determine factors at a system-level which might be influencing teachers' referral decisions. This section included questions pertaining to; the teachers' understanding of Alberta Education's regulations, their district's policies and procedures, the teachers' perception of their role with regards to special needs children, the teachers' satisfaction with previous referrals and their satisfaction with the referral form used by their district.

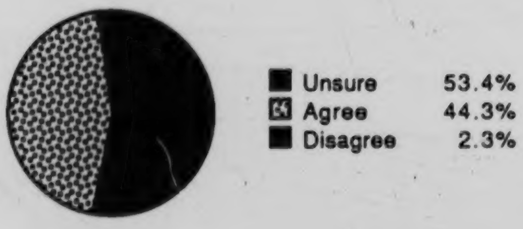
Section II contained ten Likert-type questions using a five point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). Scale scores were collapsed for interpretation into three categories; Strongly Agree and Agree were combined into one category, Unsure was left as a second category and Disagree and Strongly Disagree were combined for the third category. Of the ten questions posed three were repeated to ensure respondent reliability. The results of each of the seven research questions is provided in detail. The research question is printed in italics, the questions which were posed on the questionnaire to answer the research question are in bold print, and a visual summary of the responses to each question is provided.

Q#1. Are teachers aware of Alberta Education's regulations regarding the identification of special needs children?

(#6) The Department of Education regulations stipulate the necessity of screening school populations for special needs children.

Figure 1

Knowledge of Alberta Education's Regulations 1

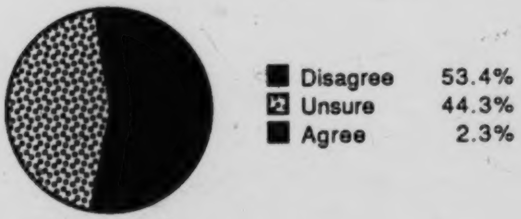


The majority of respondents, 53.3 percent, were unsure; 44.2 percent of respondents agreed, while 2.3 percent disagreed, as represented in Figure 1.

(#28) Alberta Education does not require the identification of special needs children.

Figure 2

Knowledge of Alberta Education's Regulations 2



The majority of respondents, 53.5 percent, disagreed; 44.2 percent of respondents were unsure and 2.3 percent agreed. It appears that the teachers in this study may not be sure and/or cognizant of Alberta Education's regulations with regards to the identification of special needs children. It is important to note that 58.1 percent of the sample had over ten years teaching experience.

In a follow-up interview a small sample of teachers were asked to describe the role of the Department of Education in relation to special needs children. Several teachers identified funding as the Department's major function, and others could not describe any functions.

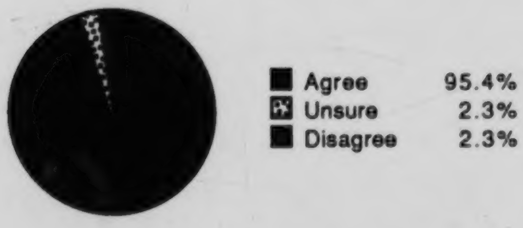
If teachers are unsure or not knowledgeable of the regulations under which they are supposedly functioning, it could definitely affect their ability to make appropriate referral decisions. Question One did emerge as a concern which is worthy of further investigation and one upon which direct remedial action could be taken at the system level.

Q#2. Are teachers aware of their responsibility to identify special needs children?

(#1) In my school district, it is the teachers' responsibility to identify special needs children.

Figure 3

Awareness of Responsibility



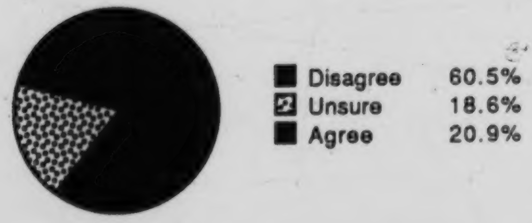
The vast majority of respondents, 95.3 percent, agreed with this statement; 2.3 percent unsure and 2.3 percent disagreed, as shown in Figure 3. It appears that the teachers in these rural schools do perceive it as their personal responsibility to identify special needs children. No confusion about the system being responsible through group screening appeared to exist.

Q#3. Are teachers aware of their district's policies and procedures for the identification and referral of special needs children?

(#20) No specific method is employed to identify and refer children with special needs in our school.

Figure 4

Awareness of Policies and Procedures 1

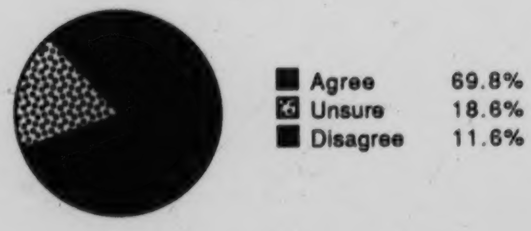


The majority of respondents, 60.5 percent, disagreed; 18.6 percent were unsure and 20.9 percent agreed.

(#29) My school district has policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of special needs children.

Figure 5

Awareness of Policies and Procedures 2



The majority of respondents, 69.8 percent, agreed; 18.6 percent were unsure and 11.6 percent disagreed, as represented in Figure 5. It appears the majority of respondents believe their districts have policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of special needs children. However, concern exists that approximately 30 percent of teachers were uninformed of district policies and procedures.

When a small sample of teachers was questioned, specifically, on what these policies and procedures were, they could not specify but assured the investigator that children were identified and referred through a variety of informal procedures including; parental referrals, teacher referrals, and achievement testing. Teachers were, generally, confident about the identification and referral of special needs children.

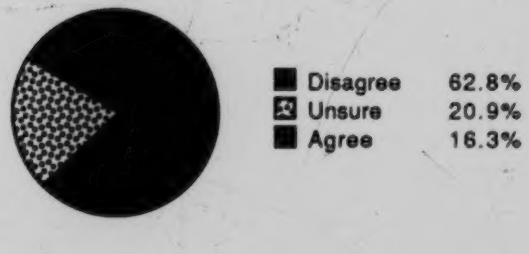
Teachers' overall lack of awareness of their district's policies and procedures could result in serious errors in referral decisions. Action to better inform teachers and expand their awareness appears to be indicated, knowing of the existence of policies and procedures is insufficient.

Q#4. Are teachers aware of the need for their on-going referral responsibility with regards to special needs children?

(#21) In my school district, a child who received resource room assistance in the previous year, will automatically continue in resource room without a referral from me.

Figure 6

On-going Referral Responsibility



The majority of respondents, 62.8 percent, disagreed; 20.9 percent were unsure and 16.3 percent agreed, as seen in Figure 6. In the school districts involved each regular classroom teacher is expected to seek resource room assistance for their special needs children on an on-going basis.

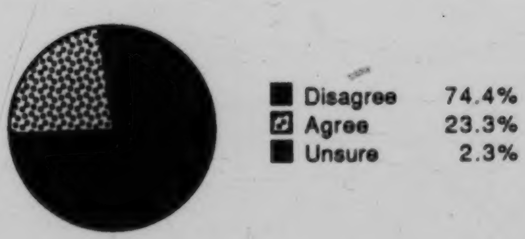
It appears that most of the teachers in this study are aware of their on-going referral responsibility. It also appears that it would be worthwhile for the school districts involved to clarify this area with their teachers, as a significant percentage, 37.2 percent, were either unsure or disagreed.

Q#5. Do teachers perceive the assessment done by their district's personnel to be beneficial to them personally?

(#10) Referring a child for further assessment rarely provides me with any new information about the child.

Figure 7

Value of Current Assessments



The majority of respondents, 74.4 percent, disagreed; 2.3 percent were unsure and 23.3 percent agreed, as shown in Figure 7. It appears that a large percentage of the respondents found an assessment to be beneficial while 23.3 percent felt it provided them with little additional information.

Of the 23.3 percent of respondents who felt assessments provided no new information 70 percent taught Division I and had some IPP experience and 30 percent taught Division II and/or had no IPP experience. Surprisingly, University training in Special Education did not, necessarily, influence the respondents' satisfaction with the assessments provided.

The school districts should possibly investigate this concern further on two levels: a) the expectations of the teachers of an assessment, and b) the kind of assessment which is being done. If approximately a quarter of all teachers are not receiving any additional information from the assessment there may be reason to believe that some of these teachers are not making appropriate referral decisions.

A follow-up interview with a small sample of teachers provided a variety of explanations for this finding including; teachers know the child more intimately than the person doing the assessment, teachers are provided with little or no feedback after assessments, the results are often written in jargon and rarely interpreted to the teacher, teachers have no background in individualized testing, and teachers often feel they cannot make the changes indicated as necessary by the assessment results.

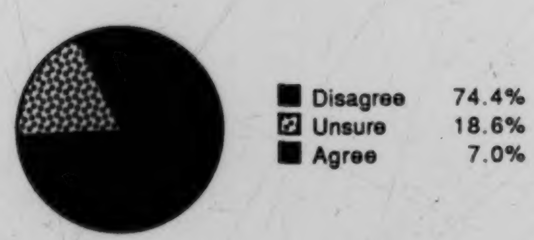
All of the concerns raised by the teachers can and should be addressed. The results of assessments in these districts are usually shared with the teachers in both report form and a follow-up interview. Further investigation of this question appears advisable; if meeting the child's needs through meeting the teachers' needs is considered viable by the districts.

Q#6. Are teachers' referral decisions affected by the referral form provided by their district?

(#22) The referral form used is too difficult and time-consuming to complete.

Figure 8

The Referral Form 1

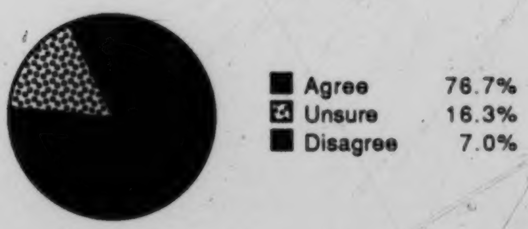


The majority of respondents, 74.4 percent, disagreed; 18.6 percent were unsure and 7 percent agreed, as represented in Figure 8. The chi-square results showed a significant relationship at the .0222 level. Over 90 percent of the teachers in Division I did not find the referral form too time consuming while only 55 percent of the Division II teachers felt this way. This suggests that the referral form being used in the schools is more suitable and/or satisfactory to the needs of Division I teachers.

(#43) The referral form allows me a chance to share my observations and clarify the reason for the referral.

<ins>Figure 9</ins>

The Referral Form 2

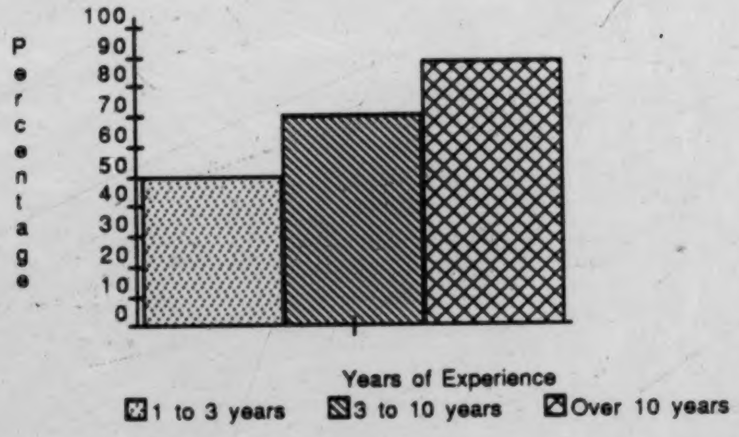


The majority of respondents, 76.7 percent agreed 16.3 percent were unsure and 7 percent disagreed, as shown in Figure 9.

Of the 76.7 percent of positive responses the breakdown of this percentage indicated that the more experienced the teacher, the more satisfied they were with the referral form. Only 50 percent of the teachers with 1 to 3 years experience were satisfied, 70 percent of teachers with 3 to 10 years were satisfied, and 88 percent of teachers with over 10 years experience were satisfied, as represented in Graph 1. The chi-square results showed a significant relationship at the .0416 level.

Graph 1

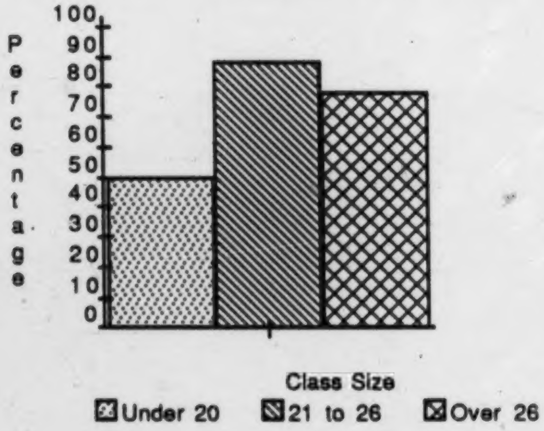
Years of Experience vs. Satisfaction with Referral Form



Furthermore, a significant relationship, at the .0241 level, was established between class size and teacher satisfaction with the referral form. Fifty percent of teachers with less than twenty students were satisfied with the referral form, while 87.5 percent of teachers with 21 to 26 students agreed, and 77.8 percent of teachers with over 26 students agreed, as shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2

Class Size vs. Satisfaction with Referral Form



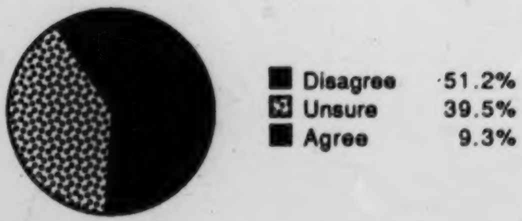
It appears that the referral forms being used by the districts are most suitable for experienced teachers with average sized classes teaching Division I.

Q#7. What are teachers' opinions of the possibility of having to prepare the required Individualized Program Plans?

(#42) The present system of preparing Individualized Program Plans is often not worth the effort.

Figure 10

Worth of Preparing IPP's



A small majority of respondents, 51.2 percent, disagreed; 39.5 percent were unsure and 9.3 percent agreed, as can be seen in Figure 10. It appears that only 51 percent, of all teachers felt the preparing of IPP's was worth the effort while approximately forty percent were unsure.

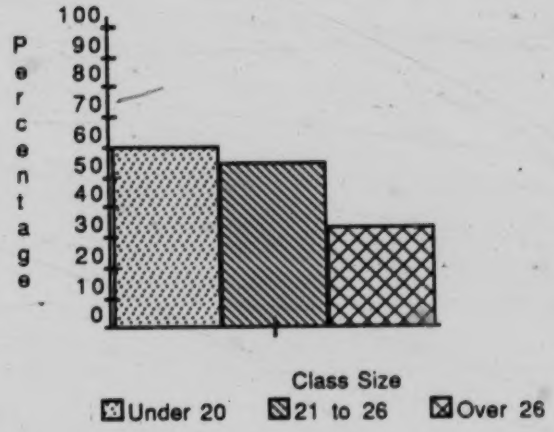
Of the 51.2 percent of teachers who agree with preparing IPP's, 64.5 percent of these had some experience with children whose program was guided by an IPP. Only 16.7 percent of teachers with no experience with IPP's agreed with the value of preparing them. Clearly, teachers with IPP experience were more likely to value its preparation. The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0189 level.

It is interesting to note the relatively high percentage, 29 percent, of teachers with IPP experience who are unsure of it's value. This finding may indicate the need for some changes in IPP preparation.

An additional relationship was established with chi-square results at a level of .0021 significance between the class size and the perceived value of preparing IPP's. As the class size increases the perceived value of preparing IPP's decreases; 60 percent of teachers with under 20 students disagreed with the statement, 54.2 percent of teachers with 21-26 students disagreed and only 33.3 percent of teachers with over 26 disagreed, as represented in Graph 3.

Graph 3

Class Size vs. Value of Preparing IPPs



As a result of the rather vague wording of the question, it is difficult to determine whether or not teachers were influenced in their referral decisions by the possibility of having to prepare an IPP. It can be concluded that teachers with large classes and no IPP experience might be more likely not to refer, if the preparing of an IPP was the expected result.

Summary

Some of the factors included at the system-level do appear to be influencing teachers' referral decisions. Most teachers in this study were unclear as to the provincial regulations regarding the identification of special needs children and their own district's policies and procedures for identification and referral. A significant percentage of teachers, 23.3 percent, expressed dissatisfaction with the current assessment provided by their districts. The benefits and current structure of using

IPP's was favored by only a small majority of teachers most of whom had under 20 students. The need for preservice and/or inservice education of teachers by both Alberta Education and the individual districts in the aforementioned areas could prove beneficial with regards to teachers' referral decisions.

Overall, respondents appeared to understand and accept their identification and referral responsibilities. Satisfaction was expressed by a majority of respondents with the referral forms being used in the participating districts.

In conclusion, of the seven questions posed, in the group of system-related concerns, five emerged as requiring additional investigation and/or clarification. Of these five, four were significant at a level of .05 or higher. Two of the questions posed did not appear to be influencing teachers' referral decisions.

Section III

School-Level Factors

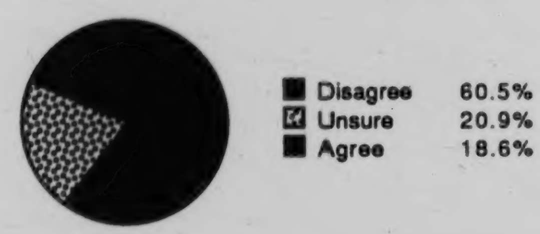
Section III consisted of a total of eight Likert-type questions to which teachers were asked to respond on a five point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). Responses were collapsed for purposes of interpretation into the three categories of Agree, Unsure and Disagree. The eight questions were related to school-level concerns which might affect teachers' referral decisions. In this section two questions were repeated to give an indication of respondent reliability, leaving a total of six actual school-related questions. The results are discussed in detail. The research question is printed in italics, the questions which were posed on the questionnaire to answer the research question are in bold print, and a visual summary of the responses to each question is provided.

Q#1. Do the teachers' believe they can adequately meet the needs of special needs students within the regular classroom?

(#2) The child will receive just as good or better quality help in my room as in the resource room.

Figure 11

Quality of Resource Room Program 1

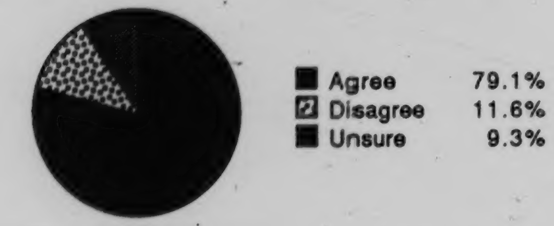


The majority of respondents, 60.5 percent, disagreed; 20.9 percent were unsure and 18.6 percent agreed, as represented in Figure 11.

(#15) The resource room offers more assistance to the child than he can receive in a regular classroom.

Figure 12

Quality of Resource Room 2



The majority of respondents, 79.1 percent, agreed; 9.3 percent were unsure and 11.6 percent disagreed., as shown in Figure 12. It appears that most teachers perceive some benefit to having their special needs students receive some resource room assistance. Approximately, one-fifth of teachers felt special needs children could receive just as good or better quality assistance within the regular class. The question emerges: Are the teachers dissatisfied with the resource room service provided in their schools, or do they feel quite capable of meeting these children's needs? Unfortunately, the research question itself did not determine the answer.

In the follow-up interview the question was asked again of a small sample of teachers and a more detailed response recorded. Generally, it appeared that some teachers felt there was a lack of cooperative planning and no feedback as to progress or program in the resource room, other teachers felt resource room programs provided little assistance to the regular class teacher who is working with the child for the majority of the day, several teachers felt the reason the child was referred is not always addressed in the resource room and the child just gets further behind. One teacher felt children get more stimulation from the regular class program and children are not isolated from their peers in the regular class program.

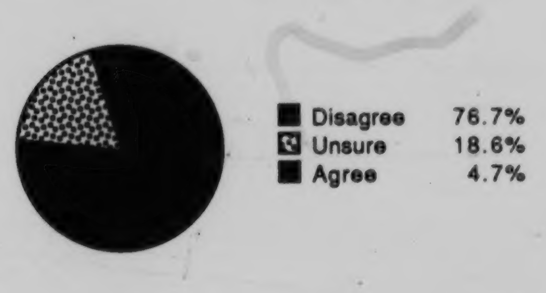
This sample of teachers indicated dissatisfaction with the style and operation of resource room services provided in their particular school. It appears these teachers would have preferred the assistance being delivered directly in the classroom, and the program being related to the classroom curriculum.

Q#2. Does the principal's attitude influence teacher referral decisions?

(#9) My principal "frowns on" teachers who can't handle the students placed in their classes.

Figure 13

Principal's Attitude Towards Referrals 1

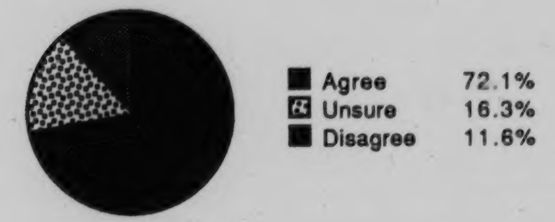


The majority of respondents, 76.7 percent, disagreed; 18.6 percent were unsure and 4.7 percent agreed, as represented in Figure 13.

(#16) My principal's attitude towards referrals encourages me to make referrals.

Figure 14

Principal's Attitude Towards Referrals 2



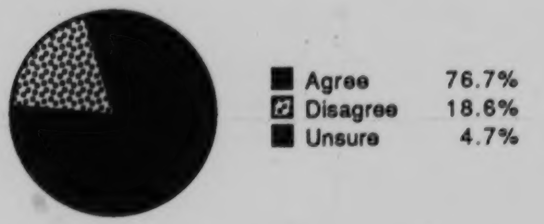
The majority of respondents, 72.1 percent, agreed; 16.3 percent were unsure and 11.6 percent disagreed, as shown in Figure 14. Most teachers in these schools perceived their principals as having a positive attitude towards the referral of special needs children. In this study, the principal's attitude did not emerge as a factor which deleteriously influenced teachers' referral decisions.

Q#3. Do teachers perceive the resource room as a temporary placement?

(#4) Children are moved into and out of the resource room on an on-going basis throughout the school year.

Figure 15

Knowledge of Movement and the Resource Room



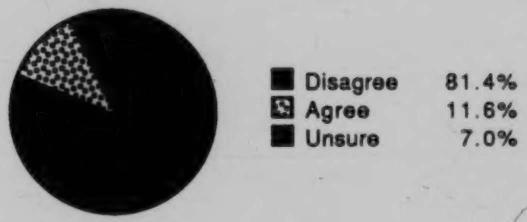
The majority of respondents, 76.7 percent, agreed; 4.7 percent were unsure and 18.6 percent disagreed, as summarized in Figure 15. Most teachers appear to perceive the resource room as a temporary short-term placement for their special needs children; however, approximately 18.6 percent of teachers view it as a full-year placement. Casual investigation indicated that in some cases, particularly in Division II, because of the degree of the child's special need resource room assistance was, in fact, required over the entire year.

Q#4. Do teachers perceive the resource room as offering academic benefits to their special needs students?

(#11) The program offered in the resource room tends to involve a lot of play with little academic transfer back to my class.

Figure 16

Academic Transfer and the Resource Room Program

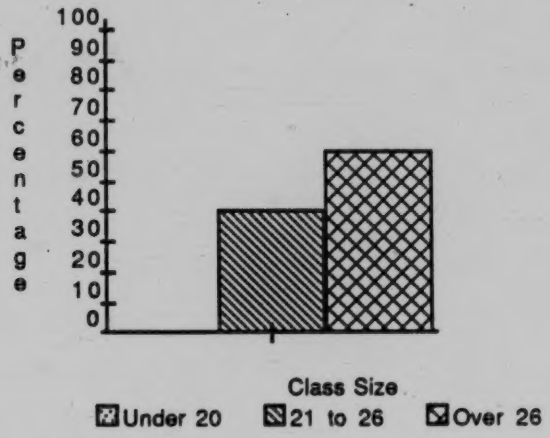


The majority of respondents, 81.4 percent, disagreed; 7 percent were unsure and 11.6 percent agreed, as summarized in Figure 16.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0193 level between class size and agreement with this statement. Of the 11.6 percent who agreed with this statement none had under 20 students, 40 percent had 21 to 26 students and 60 percent had over 26 students, as summarized in Graph 4.

Graph 4

Class Size vs. Academic Benefits of Resource Room Placement



The findings suggest that as class size increases satisfaction with academic transfer decreases.

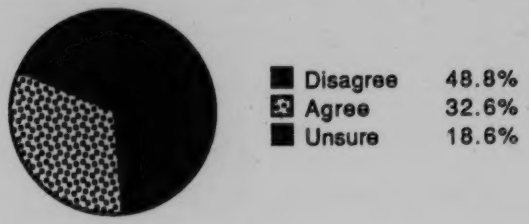
It appears that most teachers are satisfied with the resource room program and the amount of academic transfer their students achieve. In a follow-up interview with a small sample as to why some teachers might agree with the above statement the teachers all responded with comments regarding the unrelatedness of the programs used in the resource rooms. These teachers strongly felt that the student should be working on regular class materials.

Q#5. Does the teacher's perception of availability of resource room services influence referral decisions?

(#24) There is always room in the resource room for another child.

Figure 17

Perception of Availability of Placement



The majority of respondents, 48.8 percent, disagreed; 18.6 percent were unsure and 32.6 percent agreed, as represented in Figure 17. It appears that teachers' perceptions of available service to their suspected special needs children could, in fact, be affecting their referral decisions.

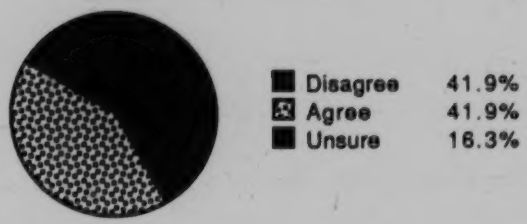
Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of consensus as to whether or not if the referral was made and resource room service deemed necessary, it would be available. This is a concern which could be addressed at the school level to provide clarification to the teachers.

Q#6. Are teachers concerned with the possible negative effects of labelling of special needs children?

(#30) Children who attend resource room are often labelled by other children.

Figure 18

Labelling Effects

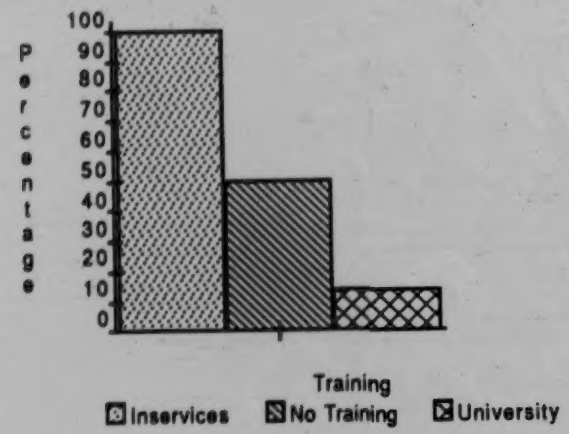


No consensus was reached on this statement. Eighteen, 41.9 percent, of the respondents agreed, 16.3 percent were unsure and 41.9 percent disagreed, Figure 18.

Significant differences, at the .023 level, were noted between teachers with inservices in Early Childhood, University courses in Early Childhood and no training in Early Childhood. One-hundred percent of the teachers who had received inservices in Early Childhood felt that children who attended resource room were labelled, 13.3 percent of teachers with University courses in Early Childhood agreed with the statement, and 50 percent of teachers with no training agreed, Graph 5.

Graph 5

Early Childhood Training vs. Labelling Concerns



It appears that most teachers with University Courses in Early Childhood do not believe that children are labelled because of attendance in resource room. Those teachers who have had only inservice and/or no training are more likely to have concerns regarding labelling. Findings indicate that some teachers' concerns about labelling may be influencing their referral decisions.

Summary

Three factors at the school-level emerged as concerns. Teachers' referral decisions in this study may be being influenced by the availability of resource room placements, concerns of labelling and academic transfer.

Overall, teachers expressed satisfaction with the resource room program offered in their schools and the progress their students made in these programs. The principals of the schools involved should be complimented on their positive attitudes towards the referral of special needs children. Further, it appears acceptable that at times the resource room functions as a short-term placement while at other times it serves children on a long-term basis.

In conclusion, of the six research questions posed in the group of school-related concerns, only three emerged as relevant. None of these concerns; availability of placements, labelling, or academic transfer are easily solved. Each school must continue to address these concerns on an on-going basis. Three of the research questions posed did not appear to influence teachers' referral decisions.

Section IV

Teacher-Related Factors

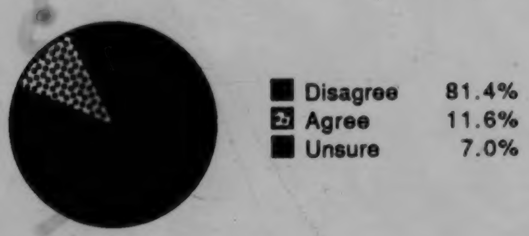
Section IV consisted of 25 Likert-type questions to which teachers were asked to respond on a five point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). The results of Strongly Agree and Agree were combined into one category, the second category was left as Unsure, and the third category consisted of Disagree and Strongly Disagree responses. Section IV was composed of twenty questions related to the individual teacher, their knowledge and opinions. Five of the questions were repeated to provide an indication of respondent reliability. Each of the questions posed is discussed in detail. The research question is printed in italics, the questions which were posed on the questionnaire to answer the research question are in bold print, and a visual summary of the responses to each question is provided.

Q#1. What is the teacher's personal opinion towards making referrals?

(#23) Regular class teachers are expected to teach any student assigned to their class without making referrals.

Figure 19

Expectations Regarding Referrals

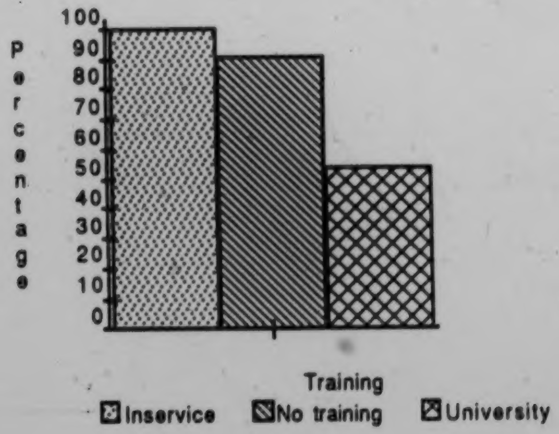


The majority of respondents, 81.4 percent, disagreed, 7 percent were unsure and 11.6 percent agreed, Figure 19.

The chi-square results showed a significant relationship at the .0232 level. Of the 81.9 percent of teachers who disagreed, 53.8 percent had training in Special Education, while 100 percent of teachers inserviced in Special Education disagreed and 90.5 percent of teachers with no training or inservicing disagreed, Graph 6.

Graph 6

Special Education Training vs. Expectations

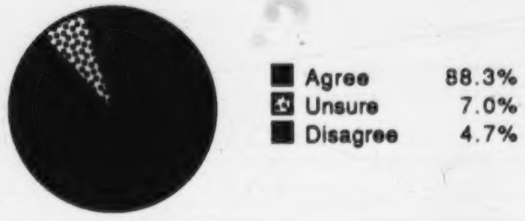


The findings suggest that the teachers with Special Education University courses are less likely to refer than those who have no training or who have had only inservicing. This particular research question should be pursued in more depth: "Why are teachers with Special Education training more hesitant to refer special needs children?".

(#31) I realize that referrals to special services are required by some of my students to enable them to attain success.

Figure 20

Need for Special Services



The majority of respondents, 88.4 percent, agreed; 7 percent were unsure and 4.7 percent disagreed, as represented in Figure 20. It appears that the majority of teachers believe that making a referral is acceptable. In previous studies teachers have indicated that they felt that making a referral was a reflection of their personal competence.

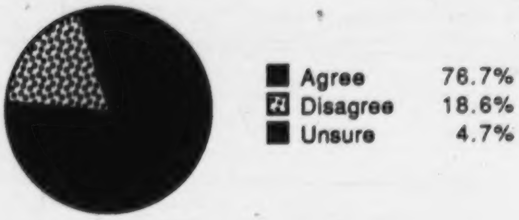
In a follow-up interview, a small sample of teachers was asked to comment further. One teacher felt it indicated grave insecurity on the part of the non-referring teacher and several teachers reflected on the lack of being able to be everything to everybody. It appears that most teachers both recognize the child's need for referral and feel confident enough to make a referral.

Q#2. Are teachers aware of the types of programs offered in the resource room?

(#3) I am familiar with the types of programs offered in the resource room.

Figure 21

Familiarity with Resource Room Programs

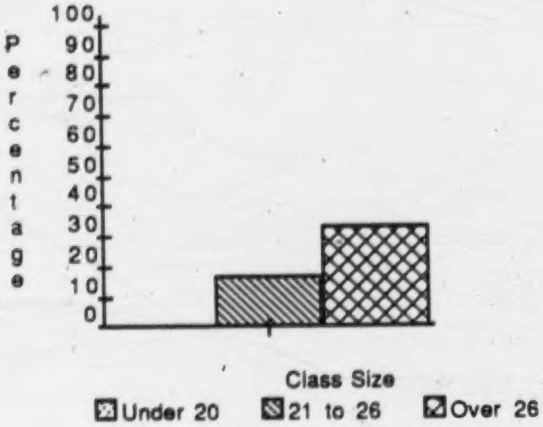


The majority of respondents, 76.7 percent, agreed; 4.7 percent were unsure and 18.6 percent disagreed, Figure 21. Two variables, class size and experience with IPP's discriminated the respondents.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0093 level between class size and familiarity with resource room programs. None of the teachers with under 20 students reported unfamiliarity with resource room programs, while 16.7 percent of those with 21-26 students reported unfamiliarity, and 33.3 percent of teachers with over 26 reported unfamiliarity, Graph 7.

Graph 7

Unfamiliarity with Resource Room Program vs. Class Size

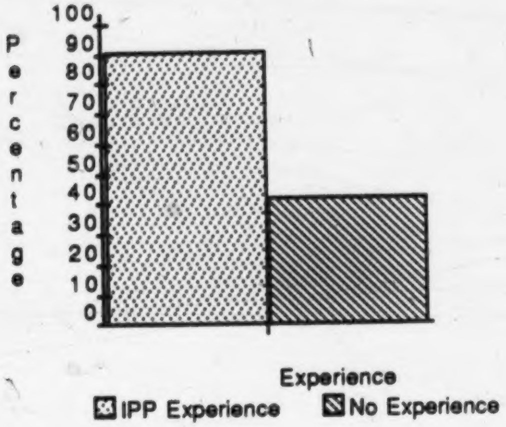


It appears that as class size increases knowledge of special services decreases.

A further relationship was established at a highly significant .0008 level between experience with resource room programs and IPP experience, Graph 8.

Graph 8

Experience with IPPs vs. Familiarity with Resource Room Programs



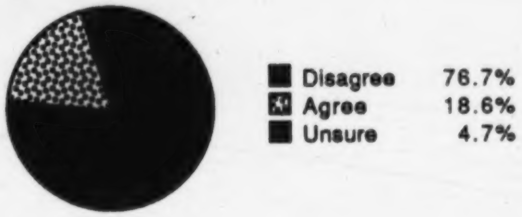
Of the teachers with some IPP experience 90.3 percent reported familiarity with resource room programs, while only 41.7 percent of the teachers without IPP experience reported familiarity. Clearly, teachers with IPP experience appear to have more knowledge of programs offered in the resource room. Most teachers perceive themselves as knowledgeable about what kind of service is provided by the resource room. It appears that teachers' knowledge could affect the teachers' referral decision dependent on the teachers' opinion of the programs offered.

Q#3. Do teachers perceive difficulties with the child exiting from the regular class program?

(#4) Children leaving, to go to the resource room, leads to serious difficulties with classroom programming and evaluation.

Figure 22

Perceived Difficulties with Exiting the Regular Class



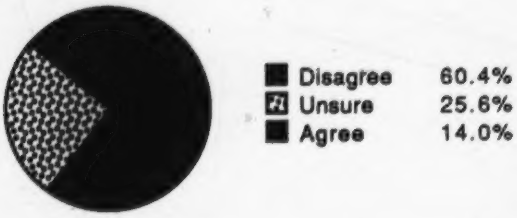
The majority of respondents, 76.7 percent, disagreed; 4.7 percent were unsure and 18.6 percent agreed, Figure 22. Most teachers reported being able to cope with programming and evaluation modifications which are a result of a child attending the resource room. Some teachers reported difficulty coping with this; it appears these teachers would be less likely to refer if resource room placement was an expected result.

Q#4. Do teachers tend to view the resource room as a place for disruptive children?

(#13) Resource room placement for a disruptive child is appropriate as it benefits the children in the regular class.

Figure 23

Resource Room Placement for the Disruptive Child

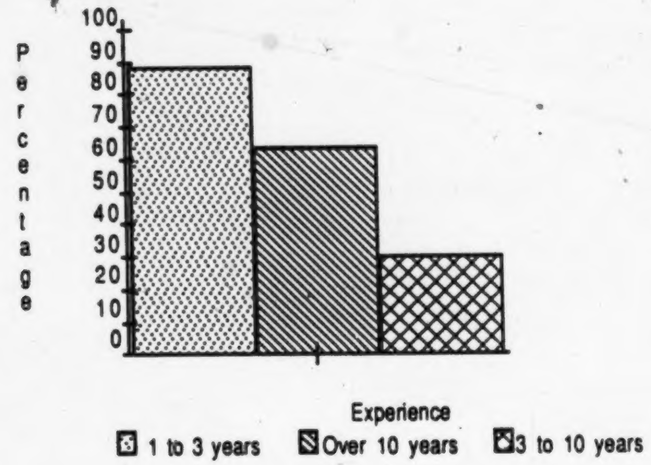


The majority of respondents, 60.5 percent, disagreed; 25.6 percent were unsure and 14 percent agreed, as summarized in Figure 23. It appears that in some cases resource room placement may be used to exclude a disruptive child from regular class participation.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0451 level. Most teachers, 87.5 percent, with 1 to 3 years experience felt this was an inappropriate placement, most teachers, 64 percent, with Over 10 years teaching experience disagreed. However, most teachers with 3 to 10 years teaching experience were unsure as to whether or not this placement would be appropriate.

Graph 9

Teaching Experience vs. Appropriateness of Placement of a Disruptive Child

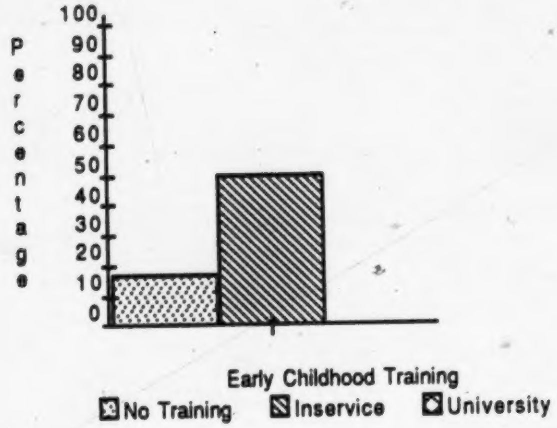


It appears that teachers with 3 to 10 years experience are most likely to refer disruptive children if the expected result is resource room placement, Graph 9.

A further chi-square result was significant at the .0414 level between Early Childhood Education and resource room placement for disruptive children. None of the teachers who had University courses in Early Childhood agreed with the statement, while 50 percent who had been inserviced agreed, and 16.7 percent who had no training agreed, Graph 10.

Graph 10

Early Childhood Education vs. Appropriateness of Placement of a Disruptive Child



It appears that teachers who have received inservice training in Early Childhood education are most likely to refer disruptive children for resource room placement.

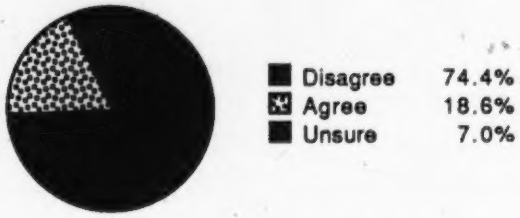
In discussions with a small sample of teachers most expressed the opinion that disruptive children belonged in the office and were not deserving of the individual attention offered in the resource room. One of the teachers felt that individualized instruction was inappropriate as the child was experiencing difficulties within the larger group situation so why put him in the resource room. None of the teachers mentioned the possibility of the child being disruptive because of being in need of a referral.

Q#5. Do teachers perceive the resource room as a personal time saver?

(#26) If the student is placed in the resource room it saves time planning for individual needs.

Figure 24

Perception of the Resource Room as a Time Saver

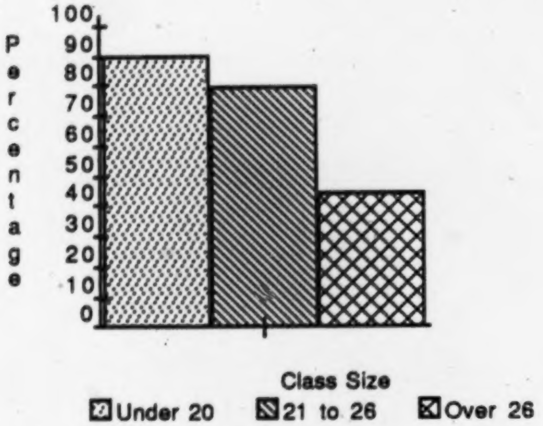


The majority of respondents, 74.4 percent, disagreed; 7 percent were unsure and 18.6 percent agreed, as represented in Figure 24.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0097 level. It appears that as class size increases the teacher is more likely to perceive the resource room as a personal time saver; while 90 percent of teachers with under 20 disagreed with the statement, only 79.2 percent with 21-26 disagreed and the percentage dropped to only 44.4 percent disagreement if the teacher had over 26 students, as summarized in Graph 11.

Graph 11

Class Size vs. Resource Room as a Time Saver



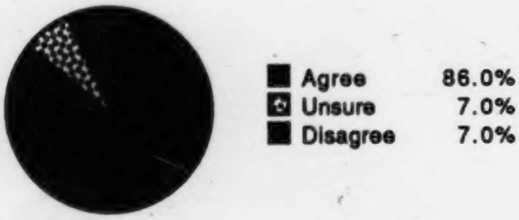
Overall, it appears most teachers in the study have experienced the additional time commitment required when a child has special needs and is admitted to the resource room.

Q#6. Are the teachers aware of the entrance criteria to the resource room?

(#17) I am familiar with the criteria for admittance to the resource room.

Figure 25

Familiarity with Entrance Criteria

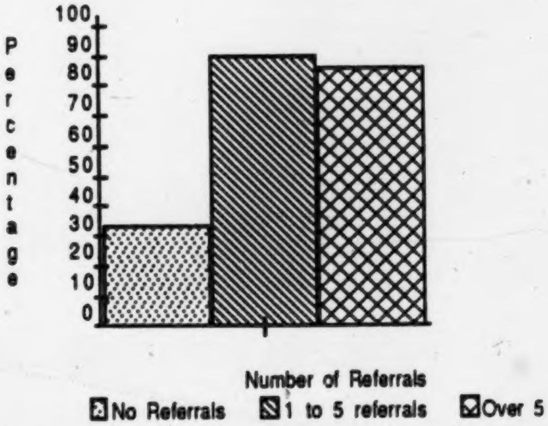


The majority of respondents, 86 percent, agreed; 7 percent were unsure and 7 percent disagreed, Figure 25. Most teachers are confident about their knowledge regarding admittance criteria.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .001 level between familiarity with admittance criteria and number of referrals made. Teachers who had made no referrals appeared unfamiliar with the entrance criteria in comparison to their colleagues who had made referrals. Only 33.3 percent of all non-referring teachers reported familiarity with entrance criteria, while 90 percent of teachers who had made 1 to 5 referrals and 85.7 percent of teachers who had made over 5 referrals reported familiarity with entrance criteria, Graph 12.

Graph 12

Number of Referrals vs. Familiarity with Entrance Criteria



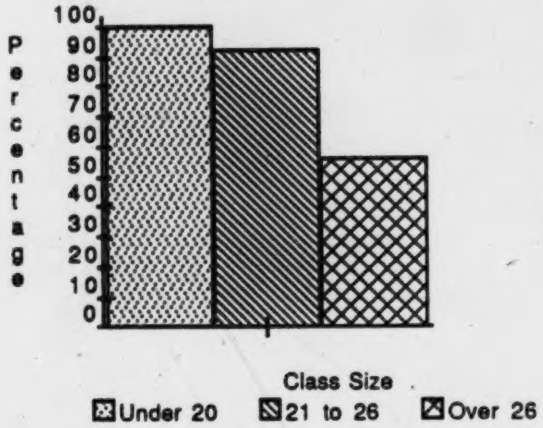
Whether or not the referring teachers' knowledge of entrance criteria is accurate was not determined.

In a follow-up interview with a small group of teachers it was apparent that most referring teachers perceived the results of a psycho-educational assessment as determining the entrance criteria. Thus, it appears a review of entrance criteria at the school level would be appropriate.

The chi-square results also showed a significant relationship between class size and familiarity with the entrance criteria. One-hundred percent of teachers with under 20 reported familiarity with entrance criteria, 91.7 percent of teachers with 21-26 reported familiarity and only 55.6 percent of teachers with over 26 reported familiarity, Graph 13.

Graph 13

Class Size vs. Familiarity with Entrance Criteria



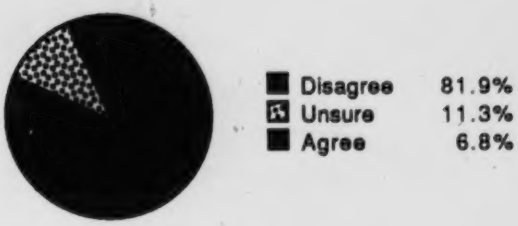
Class size appears to be a significant factor in relation to teacher knowledge of special programs.

Q#7. Do teachers experience difficulty completing the referral form?

(#19) I am unclear as to the information required to complete the referral form.

Figure 26

Knowledge of Referral Information

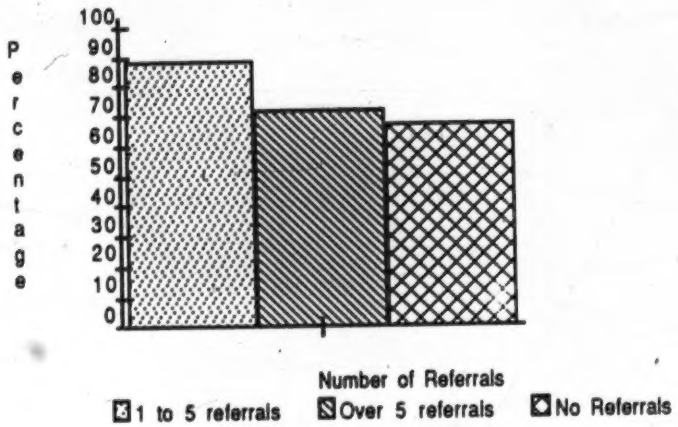


The majority of respondents, 84.4 percent, disagreed; 11.6 percent were unsure and 7 percent agreed, as summarized in Figure 26.

The chi-square result indicated a significant relationship between the number of referrals made and the teachers' knowledge of the information required to complete the referral form at the .0311 level. Most non-referring teachers, 66.7 percent were unsure of the information required, while most referring teachers, 87.9 percent and 71.4 percent respectively, indicated no problem with regards to the required information Graph 14.

Graph 14

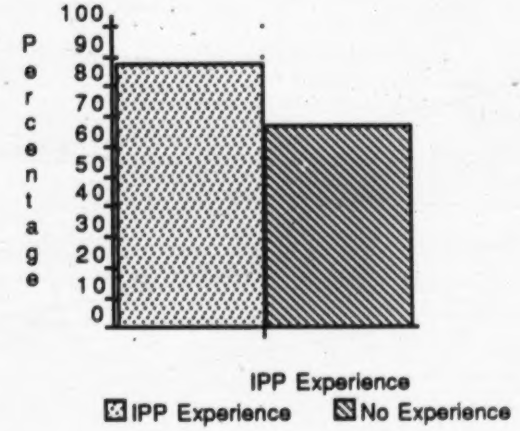
Number of Referrals vs. Knowledge of Referral Form Data



A further chi-square relationship was established at the .0154 level between teachers with some IPP experience and the required information. Of the teachers with some IPP experience 87.1 percent expressed familiarity with the information required while only 66.7 percent of those with no experience expressed familiarity, Graph 15.

Graph 15

IPP Experience Vs. Knowledge of Referral Form Data



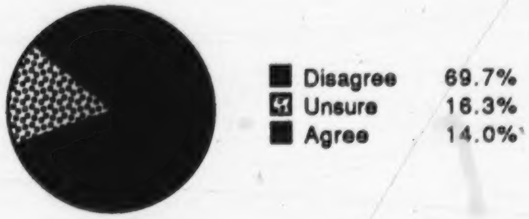
Overall, it appears that most teachers experience little difficulty providing the information required to make a referral.

Q#8. Are teachers aware of their school's referral procedure?

(#32) I am not aware of a set referral procedure at our school.

Figure 27

Awareness of Referral Procedure



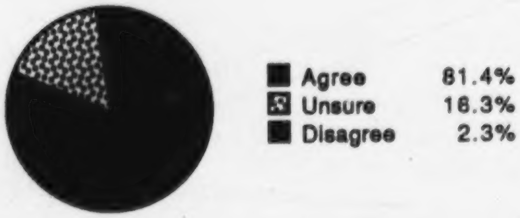
The majority of respondents, 69.8 percent, disagreed; 16.3 percent were unsure and 14 percent disagreed, Figure 27. Over a quarter of the teachers expressed a lack of knowledge regarding their school's referral procedures. All of the schools in the study do have a set referral procedure. Informing the teachers of the referral procedure could be addressed efficiently during a staff meeting.

Q#9. Are teachers knowledgeable of the indicators to identify special needs children?

(#5) I am familiar with the observable symptoms of special needs children at my grade level.

Figure 28

Familiarity with Observable Symptoms 1

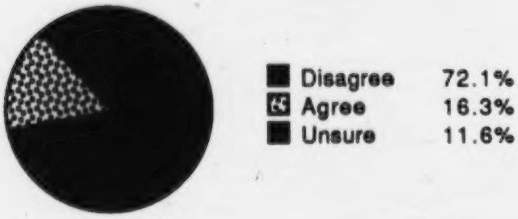


The majority of respondents, 81.4 percent, agreed; 16.3 percent were unsure and 2.3 percent disagreed, Figure 28.

(#27) I am unsure as to the behaviors and/or characteristics of special needs children.

Figure 29

Familiarity with Observable Symptoms 2



The majority of respondents, 72.1 percent, disagreed; 11.6 percent were unsure and 16.3 percent agreed, as summarized in Figure 29. It appears that most teachers are confident in their ability to identify special needs children, and that this is not a factor in their decision to make a referral.

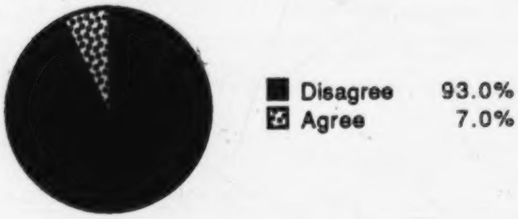
In follow-up interviews a small sample of teachers was asked to elaborate and give examples of the criteria they used for identification. The teachers, generally, referred to math and reading performance in the regular class as adequate identification criteria. One teacher mentioned higher level thinking skills which indicated the child's need for an additional challenge.

Q#10. Do most teachers feel that teaching the curriculum has to take priority over meeting individual needs?

(#18) In my situation, teaching the curriculum must take priority over students' individual difficulties.

Figure 30

Individual Needs vs. Teaching Curriculum

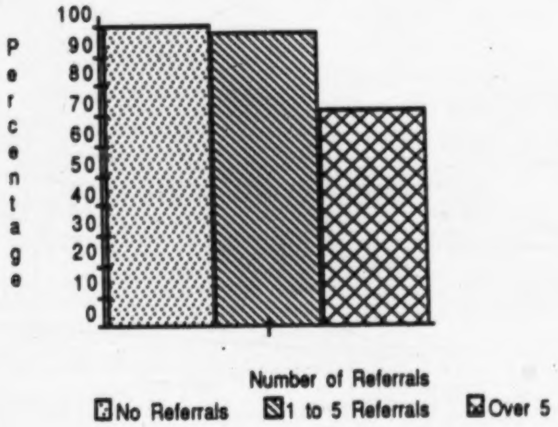


The majority of respondents, 93 percent, disagreed and 7 percent respondents agreed, Figure 30.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0486 level between referring teachers and disagreement with the statement. One-hundred percent of the non-referring teachers felt that individual needs took priority over the curriculum. Of the teachers who had made 1 to 5 referrals 97 percent felt individual needs took priority while only 71.4 percent of teachers who had made over 5 referrals felt individual needs took priority, Graph 16.

Graph 16

Number of Referrals vs. Teaching the Curriculum



These findings indicate that the teachers who make the most referrals tend to be the teachers who as a group think that teaching the curriculum takes priority over individual children's needs.

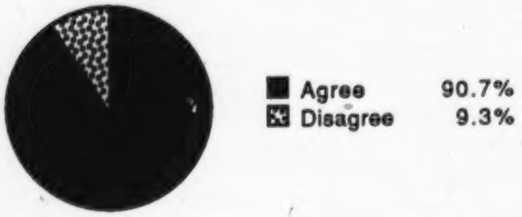
Overall, it appears that teachers in this study are more interested in teaching children than in teaching curriculum. This response is very encouraging from the perspective of all children.

Q#11. Are teachers hesitant to contact parents and share their concerns?

(#12) Contacting parents about their child's difficulties is one of the first steps I take.

Figure 31

Contacting Parents

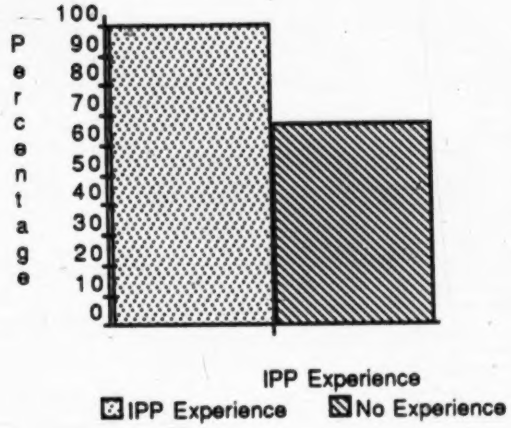


The majority of respondents, 90.7 percent, agreed and 9.3 percent disagreed, Figure 31.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0053 level between parent contact and IPP experience. Of the teachers with IPP experience 100 percent agreed with the statement while only 66.7 percent of those who had no experience agreed with the statement, Graph 17.

Graph 17

IPP Experience vs. Contacting Parents



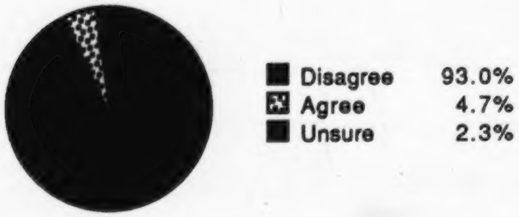
It appears the teachers with IPP experience are much more likely to contact parents early than teachers with no IPP experience. Apparently, most teachers feel comfortable contacting parents and sharing their concerns. The districts involved in the study require that parental consent accompany all referrals.

Q#12. Do teachers only refer children who are possibilities for retention?

(#33) A child should be referred only if he is in danger of failing the grade.

Figure 32

Referrals Based on Achievement 1

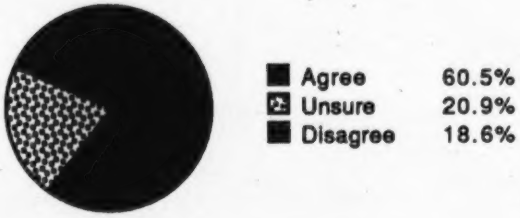


The majority of respondents, 93 percent, disagreed; 2.3 percent were unsure and 4.7 percent agreed, as shown in Figure 32.

(#14) A child suspected of having special needs should be referred even if he is achieving.

Figure 33

Referrals Based on Achievement 2



The majority of respondents, 60.5 percent, agreed; 20.9 percent were unsure and 18.6 percent disagreed, Figure 33. It appears that most teachers do not base their referral decisions, solely, on whether or not the child will pass the grade. However, as a group it appears that approximately 40 percent of teachers are unsure or feel no reason to refer if the child is achieving. This attitude and/or lack of knowledge on the part of teachers could lead to some very serious errors in referral decisions, for example a hearing impaired child can often achieve at an average level and yet still has special needs.

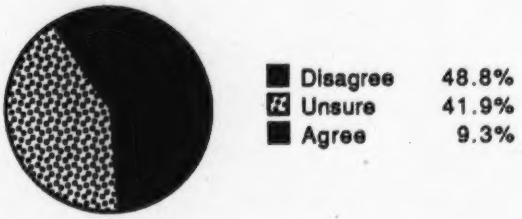
In a follow-up interview with a small sample of teachers all felt it would be deleterious to the child as a whole to refer him if he was achieving at a satisfactory level unless the child's special need appeared to be enrichment.

Q#13. How long should teachers wait before referring a child?

(#25) A child suspected of having special needs should be referred in the first month of school.

Figure 34

Timing of Referral 1

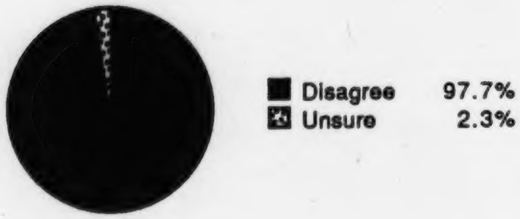


No clear majority was noted on this question: 48.8 percent of the respondents disagreed; 9.3 percent agreed and 41.9 percent were unsure, Figure 34.

(#34) It is difficult to refer a child much before January, as a teacher doesn't know him well enough until then.

Figure 35

Timing of Referral 2



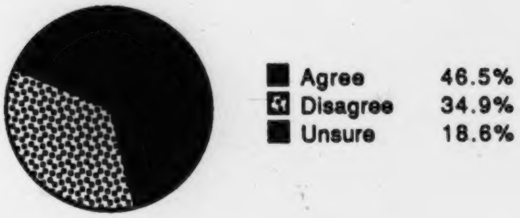
The majority of respondents, 97.7 percent, disagreed and 2.3 percent were unsure, Figure 35. It appears that most teachers clearly believe a referral can be made before January; however, a lesser number believe it can be made in September. Teachers who are hesitant to make referrals in September are perhaps, attempting to allow the child time to settle in and/or have not exhausted their own personal techniques for dealing with the child's special needs.

Q#14. Does class size influence teachers' referral decisions?

(#35) Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a large class, as they will have difficulty meeting individual needs.

Figure 36

Class Size vs. Number of Referrals

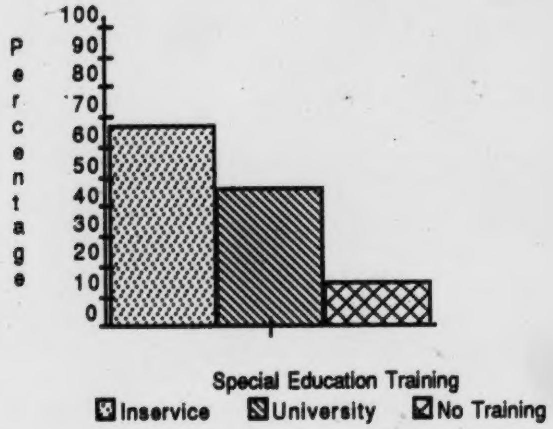


No clear consensus was reached on this question, as shown in Figure 36. A small majority of 46.5 percent respondents agreed; 18.6 percent were unsure and 34.9 percent disagreed.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0158 level. Of the teachers who disagreed with this statement 66.7 percent reported having been inserviced in Special Education, 46.2 percent reported having had University courses in Special Education and 14.3 percent reported having no training or inservicing in Special Education. Graph 18 represents the results.

Graph 18

Special Education Training vs. Referrals related to Class Size



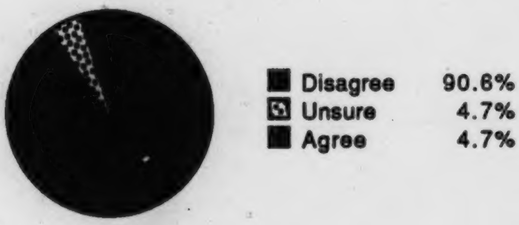
It appears that teachers who have had training and/or Special Education courses at University are much more likely not to refer children based on class size alone.

Q#15. Do teachers perceive a referral as beneficial to the child?

(#36) A referral will do more harm than good.

Figure 37

Perceived Benefits of Referral



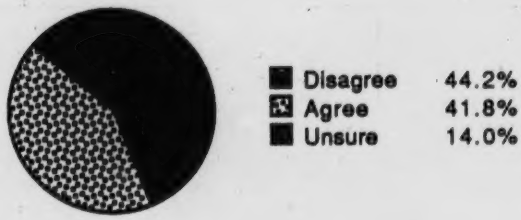
The majority of respondents, 90.7 percent, disagreed; 4.7 percent were unsure and 4.7 percent agreed, Figure 37. It appears that most teachers perceive the referral as beneficial to the child and only a small percentage were unsure or perceived referrals as harmful. In a follow-up interview with a small sample of teachers no negative referral experiences were reported.

Q#16. Are teachers aware of the need for their personal vigilance with regards to special needs identification?

(#8) Children suspected of having special needs often slip through a few grades before being recognized.

Figure 38

Awareness of Identification Responsibility 1



Of the 43 respondents 44.2 percent disagreed; 14 percent were unsure and 41.8 percent agreed, Figure 38. The question did not divide the groups on any of the variables significantly. Experience with IPP's was approaching significance with a chi-square result at the .07 level. It appeared that teachers with IPP experience were half as likely to believe someone else would have referred the child previously.

(#37) If the child has special needs someone else would have referred the child before me.

The entire sample of 43 respondents disagreed with this statement. It appears that all the teachers are aware of the need for their personal involvement in the identification of special needs children. Each of the districts should be complimented for their clarity and communication in this area.

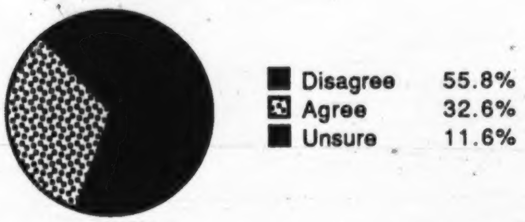
Respondent reliability on this research question was poor. The findings suggest the teachers appear to be differentiating between the words "recognized" and "referred".

Q#17. Do teachers consider their colleagues opinions when making referral decisions?

(#38) Other teachers' opinions affect my referral decisions.

Figure 39

Influence of Colleagues' Opinions



The majority of respondents, 55.8 percent, disagreed; 11.6 percent were unsure and 32.6 percent agreed, Figure 39. It appears that most teachers do not respect or value their colleagues' professional opinions with respect to referral decisions.

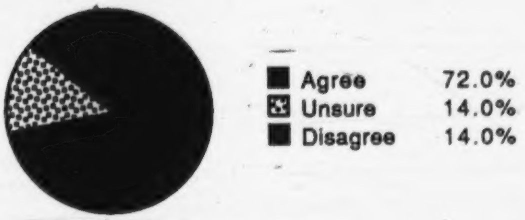
In a follow-up interview with a small group of teachers several comments were recorded including ones with respect to the other teachers' competence, giving the child a fresh start each year and being true to one's own perceptions.Unfortunately, this attitude has serious implications for children who are referred in May or June and passed on to the next grade. It appears that the new teacher would not necessarily respect the previous teachers' referral decision.

Q#18. Do individual teachers have a combination of criteria which they employ to identify special needs children?

(#39) I have a set of formal and informal criteria which I use to identify special needs children.

Figure 40

Identification Criteria

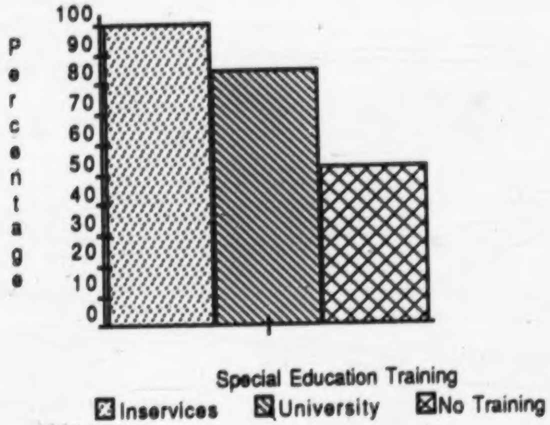


The majority of respondents, 72.1 percent, agreed; 14 percent were unsure and 14 percent disagreed, Figure 40. More than a quarter of the teachers reported no use of formal or informal criteria to identify special needs children, unfortunately we have no idea on what they base their referral decisions.

The chi-square results indicated a significant relationship at the .0158 level. All of the teachers who had inservicing in Special Education reported having a set of criteria, 84.7 percent of teachers with University courses in Special Education reported having a set of criteria, and only 52.4 percent of teachers with no inservicing or education reported having a set of criteria, Graph 19.

Graph 19

Special Education Training vs. Identification Criteria

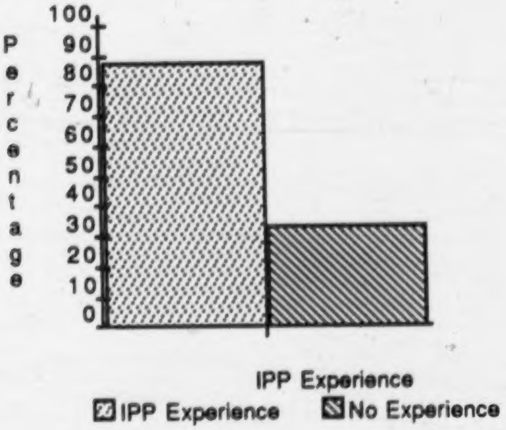


It appears that both inservicing and University courses are beneficial to teachers with respect to their skills in identifying special needs children.

A further chi-square relationship emerged as highly significant at the .0001 level. Most teachers, 87.1 percent, with IPP experience reported having a set of identification criteria in contrast only 33.3 percent of teachers with no IPP experience reported having a set of identification criteria, Graph 20.

Graph 20

IPP Experience vs. Identification Criteria



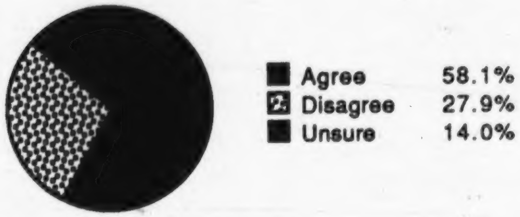
In a follow-up interview a small group of teachers was asked to elaborate on their personal criteria. Responses included; standardized group test results, behavior problems, personal observations, intuition, family history, and peer relations.

Q#19. Do teachers' perceive the benefits of referral when the child's home life appears to be the basis of the child's special needs.

(#40) Concerns about the child's home life might cause me to make a referral.

Figure 41

Referrals Based on Home Life Concerns



The majority of respondents, 58.1 percent, agreed; 14 percent were unsure and 27.9 percent disagreed, Figure 41. It appears that approximately 42 percent of teachers would not necessarily refer a child due to concerns about the child's home life.

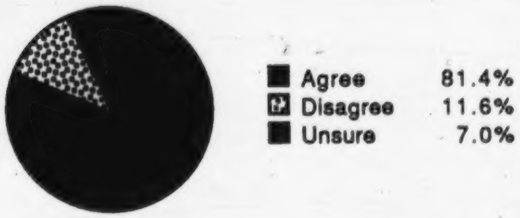
This particular finding is startling with respect to children who are neglected or abused and of serious concern with respect to other special needs children. Further thorough investigation of this teacher attitude was definitely warranted, and conducted in a follow-up interview with a small sample of teachers. They explained that the reason they might not refer these children is because they wouldn't want to make things worse for them, "doesn't he have enough problems", "can't anyone have a private life", "what if I am wrong" etc.

Q#20. Do teachers respect the opinion of parents?

(#41) Parents expressing concerns might cause me to make a referral.

Figure 42

Parental Influence on Referral Decisions



The majority of respondents, 81.4 percent, agreed; 7 percent were unsure and 11.6 percent disagreed, Figure 42. It appears that most teachers work together as partners with the parents in the education of the children.

In a follow-up interview a small group of teachers was asked to comment on why some teachers might ignore the parents concerns. Only one teacher responded and stated that the teacher is in a much better position to make referral decisions than the parent, the parent has no understanding of the child's educational situation.

Summary

Section IV consisted of twenty teacher-related questions regarding teachers' knowledge and opinions regarding the services offered in their schools; special needs children, parents and referrals. Several factors emerged as possibly affecting teachers' referral decisions.

Of the twenty questions posed five were directly related to the services the child would receive if the teacher had made a positive referral. Overall it appears that teachers: believe they know the types of programs offered in the resource room; do not find children leaving to go to resource room disruptive; do not believe resource room is an appropriate placement for disruptive children; do not perceive resource room as a personal time saver; and believe they are familiar with the entrance criteria. In conclusion, it does not appear that confusion about the resource room and/or its services existed in the minds of most teachers involved in the study.

Most teachers reported being satisfied and knowledgeable about the referral forms and procedures in their schools. Although they report being knowledgeable of set referral procedures, they often prefer to use informal procedures to make the referral.

On the whole, most teachers expressed a positive personal attitude towards making referrals and felt it would be beneficial to the student. It appears that as a group the teachers felt special needs children should be identified and referred prior to January. Generally, teachers felt confident about their personal ability to identify special needs children and about who they should be referring. Unfortunately, some referral decisions are being made upon faulty information which the teachers' perceive to be true, for example that they are knowledgeable of the indicators of special needs children.

With respect to parents, most teachers expressed a need to be in contact with parents. Most teachers also indicated a respect for parents' opinions.

Most teachers expressed little respect for their colleagues opinions with regards to the referral of special needs children.

Section V

Barriers/Facilitators

Section V of the questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions in which the respondents were asked to describe any factors they perceived as barriers to making referrals and any factors which they perceived as facilitating referrals. The actual comments made by respondents are recorded in detail in Appendix F.

Barriers

Of the 43 respondents, 53.5 percent either perceived no barriers to making referrals and/or chose not to share the barriers they perceived. A total of 46 comments were made. Of the 46 comments; fourteen were related to the availability and operation of the resource room, eight were related to difficulties obtaining parental consent, eight were related to protecting the child from being labelled, seven were related to the availability, time and cost of assessments, and six were related to the teacher's personal time and competence. In summary, teachers reported system-related, school-related, and teacher-related factors as affecting their referral decisions.

Facilitating Factors

Of the 43 respondents, 60.5 percent, either perceived no facilitating factors and/or chose not to share them. A total of 31 comments were made by the remaining respondents. Of these comments; ten were related to the assessment and its value, eight were related to the resource room personnel and programs, five were related to the benefits to the child, three were related to the support they personally received from their administration, two were related to the benefits to the teacher themselves, and two were related to the benefits to the parents.

In summary, the teachers in this study were able to specify some system-related factors, some school-related factors and some teacher-related factors which they perceived as facilitating their referrals.

Section VI

Vignettes

Section VI consisted of sixteen vignettes. Respondents were asked to make a referral decision based on the information provided in each of the vignettes. One question explored in this section was; what factors combine with either the chid's behavior or academic achievement to generate a referral. A second question related to determining whether academic achievement or behavioral concerns was a more powerful influence on the referral decision. A numerical summary of specific results is provided in Appendix E.

A table summarizing the results pertaining to each of the research questions related to child-dependent characteristics is provided. The data analysis consisted of establishing a level of significance using a chi-squared statistic. The analysis was done by combining the non-referring teachers together as a group (NO responses and ADDITIONAL INFORMATION responses) and the YES responses and attempting to determine any differences between these and the teacher information reported in Section I. If a level of significance higher than .05 was discovered the findings were reported.

Q#1. Do Gender and behavior combine? (Table 8)

Table 8

Referrals Related to Gender and Behavior

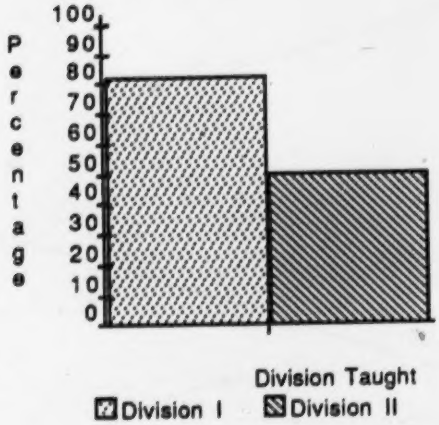
	YES	NO	ADD. INFO
Girl	51.2%	37.2%	11.6%
Boy	27.9%	51.2%	20.9%

A majority of respondents, 51.2 percent, referred the girl with inappropriate behavior while a majority of respondents, 51.2 percent, did not refer the boy. It appears that girls with behavior problems are almost twice as likely to be referred as boys.

A significant, .0372, chi-square relationship was noted between the Division taught by the teacher and the decision to refer the boy with inappropriate behavior. Of the non-referring teachers 81.8 percent taught Division I while only 50 percent taught Division II, as shown in Graph 21.

Graph 21

Division Taught vs. Non-Referrals



It appears that Division I teachers are much less likely to refer a boy with behavior problems than Division II teachers.

Q#2. Do gender and academic achievement combine? (Table 9)

Table 9

Referrals Related to Gender and Achievement

	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Girl	**90.7%**	**9.3%**	
Boy	**72.1%**	**20.9%**	**7%**

A majority of respondents, 90.7 percent, and 72.1 percent, respectively, referred both the girl and boy with weak academic achievement. It appears that a child with weak academics is perceived as in need of referral regardless of gender.

Overall, weak academic achievement caused twice as many referrals of children as did behavior.

Q#3. Does ethnicity combine with behavior? (Table 10)

Table 10

Referrals Related to Ethnicity and Behavior

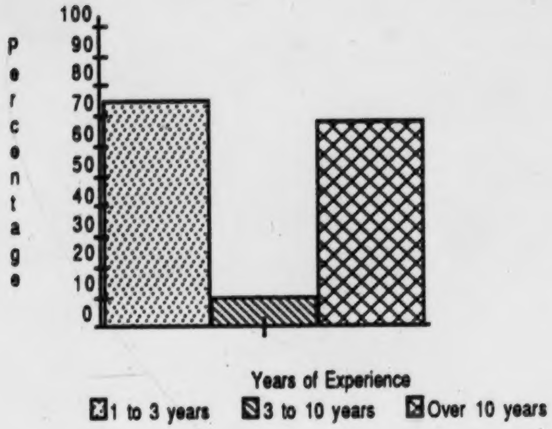
	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Caucasian	**27.9%**	**55.8%**	**16.3%**
Non-Caucasian	**44.2%**	**37.2%**	**18.6%**

A majority of respondents, 55.8 percent, did not refer the Caucasian child with behavior problems. A majority of respondents, 46.7 percent, did refer the Non-Caucasian child with behavior problems. It appears that Non-Caucasian children with behavior problems were referred more than Caucasian children with behavior problems, and that ethnicity may be combining with behavior leading to a referral.

Significant chi-squared relationships were established between a number of variables. The first was between the teachers' years of experience and the decision to refer. The chi-square results were at the highly significant level of .0037. Of the non-referring teachers, 75 percent had 1 to 3 years experience, 10 percent had 3 to 10 years experience, and 68 percent had over 10 years experience, as represented in Graph 22.

Graph 22

Teaching Experience vs. Non-Referrals

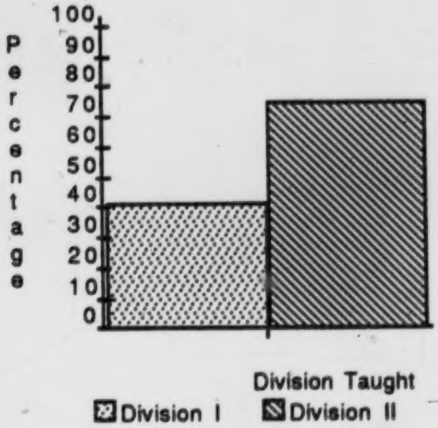


It appears that teachers with up to three years experience and/or over ten years experience are much less likely to be biased by the combination of ethnicity and behavior than teachers with three to ten years experience.

A second significant chi-squared result at the .0444 level was evidenced between Division I and Division II teachers and non-referrals, as summarized in Graph 23.

Graph 23

Division Taught Vs. Non-Referrals

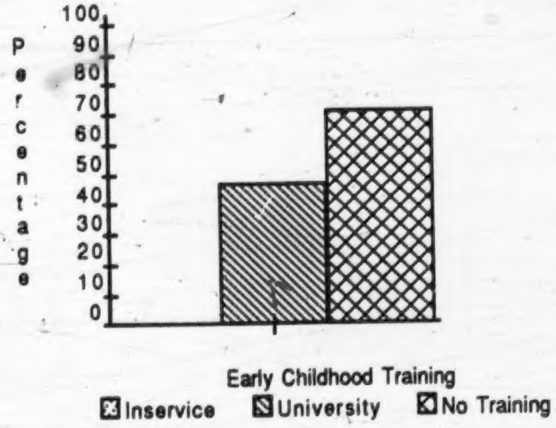


It appears that in the case of ethnicity combining with behavior Division II teachers are much less likely to be biased by this combination than Division I teachers.

A final chi-square result at the .0207 level emerged between Early Childhood training and ethnicity.

Graph 24

Early Childhood Training vs. Non-Referrals



As represented in Graph 24 all of the teachers who had received some inservicing in Early Childhood referred the child whose ethnicity and behavior combined. Of the teachers with University training in Early Childhood 46.7 percent did not refer the child and 70.8 percent of teachers with no training in Early Childhood did not refer the child. It appears teachers with no training in Early Childhood are much less likely to refer a child based on the combination of ethnicity and behavior.

Q#4. Does ethnicity combine with academics? (Table 11).

Table 11

Referrals Related to Ethnicity and Achievement

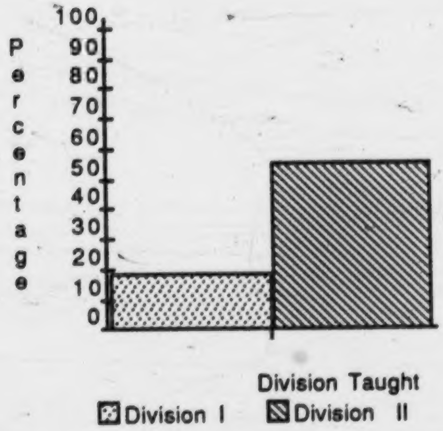
	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Caucasian	86.1%	9.3%	4.6%
Non-Caucasian	65.1%	20.9%	14%

A majority of respondents, 86 percent and 65 percent, respectively, referred both Non-Caucasian and Caucasian children with weak academics.

A significant chi-square result at the ..0334 level was recorded between the Division taught and the need for referral of the Non-Caucasian child. The results are summarized in Graph 25.

Graph 25

Division Taught vs. Non-Referrals



It appears that Division II teachers are much less likely to make referrals based on the combination of ethnicity and weak academics. Division I teachers appear to consider this a much more powerful combination and would refer these children more than twice as often as Division II teachers.

Overall, weak academic achievement caused more than three times as many referrals of children in this category than did behavior.

Q#5. Does socioeconomic status combine with behavior? (Table 12).

Table 12

Referrals Related to Socioeconomic Status and Behavior

	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Low	60.5%	30.2%	9.3%
High	79.1%	20.9%	

A majority of respondents, 60 percent and 79 percent, respectively, referred boys of both low and high economic status. It appears that socioeconomic status and behavior do not combine to result in a referral.

Q#6. Does socioeconomic status combine with academic achievement? (Table 13)

Table 13

Referrals Related to Socioeconomic Status and Achievement

	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Low	81.4%	11.6%	7%
High	27.9%	58.1%	14%

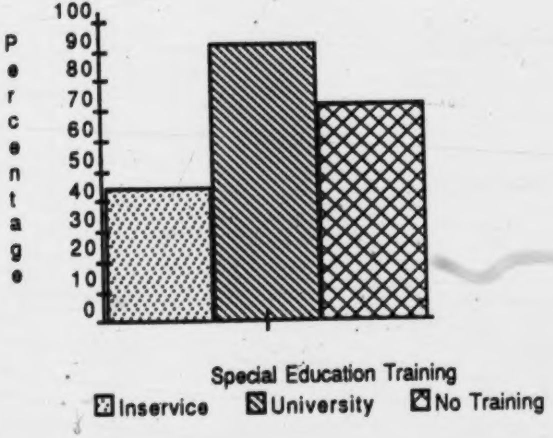
A majority of respondents, 58.1 percent, did not refer the child of high socioeconomic status with weak academics. Almost three times as many respondents, 81.4 percent, referred the child of low socioeconomic status with weak academics.

Overall, it appears that the teachers' knowledge of the child's socioeconomic status does affect their referral decisions. Socioeconomic status and behavior appeared to be more powerful in influencing of teachers' decisions than did socioeconomic status and weak academics.

A significant chi-square result at the .0482 level suggested a relationship between high socioeconomic status and Special Education training, as summarized in Graph 26.

Graph 26

Special Education Training vs. Non-Referrals

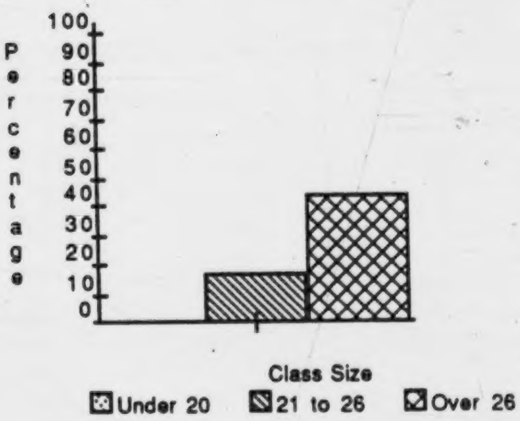


In the case of the child of high socioeconomic status and low academic achievement it appears teachers with University training in Special Education are the least likely to make a referral. One can only speculate as to what in their training influenced their referral decision in this way, however, further inservice of these teachers along with those with no Special Education training appears to be indicated.

A further chi-square at the .0426 level was established between the child with low socioeconomic status and academic difficulties and the teachers' class size. The results are presented in Graph 27.

Graph 27

Class Size vs. Non-Referrals



All of the teachers with under 20 children referred the low socioeconomic child with weak academics and yet one would think that this teacher was the most likely to be able to meets the child's needs due to the small numbers. The fact that 44.4 percent of teachers with over 26 children did not refer the child leads to a variety of interesting questions, none of which are within the breadth of the current investigation.

Q#7. Does attractiveness combine with behavior? (Table 14)

Table 14

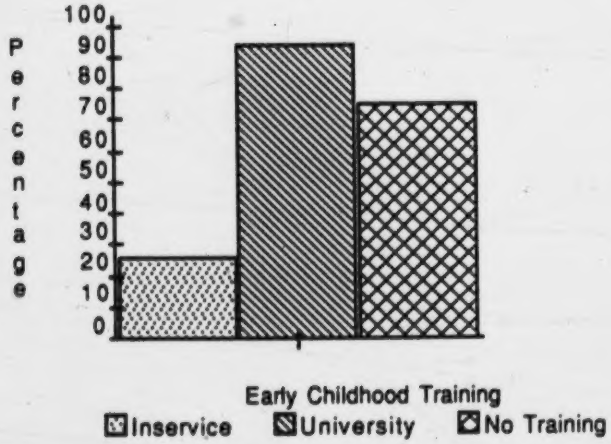
Referrals Related to Attractiveness and Behavior

	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Attractive	9.3%	86%	4.7%
Unattractive	23.3%	62.7%	14%

A majority of respondents, 86 percent and 62 percent, respectively, did not refer either the attractive or unattractive child with behavior problems. A significant chi-square result at the .0153 level was established between the unattractive child with inappropriate behavior and the teachers' training in Early Childhood, as shown in Graph 28.

Graph 28

Early Childhood Training vs. Non-Referrals



It is difficult to explain the results, in that something to do with inservices in

Early Childhood appears to bias the teacher towards referring the unattractive child with inappropriate behavior. Let it suffice to say, it appears that teachers with University training and/or no training are much less likely to refer an unattractive child with behavior problems.

Q#8. Does attractiveness combine with academics? (Table 15)

Table 15

Referrals Related to Attractiveness and Achievement

	YES	NO	ADD. INFO.
Attractive	51.2%	18.6%	30.2%
Unattractive	55.8%	27.9%	16.3%

A majority of respondents, 22 and 24, respectively did refer the attractive and unattractive child with weak academics.

Overall, it appears that the child's attractiveness was not a factor which influenced teachers' referral decisions. Children both attractive and unattractive children were referred three times more often because of weak academics as opposed to behavior.

Summary

Section VI was composed of a variety of combinations of child-related factors. Not all of the respondents were able to make referral decisions and were allowed to respond by requesting additional information. Overall, children who had behavior problems were referred significantly less often than children who had weak academics and girls with behavior problems were more likely to be referred than boys.

A total of 351 referral decisions were made by the respondents, of these 128, 36.5 percent, involved a referral with a behavioral variable and 223, 63.5 percent, involved a referral with an academic achievement variable. It appears that most teachers are more likely to refer children with academic deficits as opposed to behavioral difficulties. The only exception was in the case of socioeconomic status, in which case more children were referred because of behavioral difficulties.

Section VII

Referrals

Section VII consisted of one open-ended question in which the respondents were asked to describe a child they had referred. A total of 65.1 percent of teachers responded to this section. This section was left unguided in an attempt to further elicit what factors teachers would identify as influencing their referral decisions. A detailed account of each of the responses is contained in Appendix F. A total of 113 characteristics were identified by teachers. In all cases more than one child-related characteristic was described. A summary of the characteristics reported by the teachers follows.

Characteristics listed by teachers covered a broad range. They were loosely grouped into four categories; academic comments, behavioral comments, comments on the home and other comments. The sex of only thirteen of the 28 referrals was revealed, ten were boys and three were girls.

The child's academic achievement was reported by teachers 42 times. Nine of the comments related to reading difficulties and nine of the comments related to completing assignments on time. Overall, low academics was reported in seven cases. Slow learning was reported in six cases. Spelling, math, and previous difficulty were reported less than five times and accounted for the balance of academic comments. It appears that teachers often refer children with reading difficulties and/or children who are experiencing difficulty completing their work on time.

Comments on the child's behavior were reported 44 times. Fourteen of the comments related to the child's attending behaviors. An additional four comments were made regarding listening behaviors. Eleven comments reporting inappropriate classroom behaviors (masturbation, aggression, etc.) were reported. Some comments related to poor work habits were reported five times. It appears that behavior is definitely a factor which teachers consider when making a referral.

Six comments were made by the teachers regarding the home or parents. Three teachers reported the parent pushing for the referral and two reported a lack of support from the parents. One teacher reported the child's poor home life as part of the reason for referral.

The remaining comments related to poor self-concept and comments related to delayed speech/language. One teacher expressed concerns regarding the child being too old for the grade placement.

Summary

The comments reported by teachers about children they had referred indicate that teachers appear to be making referrals based on a combination of factors.

Comments regarding behavior and academic achievement are definitely most prevalent, and were relatively equally represented in this Section. In five cases only academic comments were made and in one case only behavioral comments were made. A tentative conclusion might be that the child's academic achievement and behavior are the two most powerful factors influencing the teacher's referral decision. The interaction of these two factors resulted in the referral of 22 of the 28 cases.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an analysis of a great deal of data obtained through (1) questionnaires received from 43 of 70 Elementary teachers in six East Central and Central Alberta schools and (2) interviews with five of the teachers from these schools. Data were classified and discussed under seven main headings: the teacher variables, the system-level factors, the school-level factors, the teacher-related factors, the barriers and facilitators to referral, \the child-related factors, and past referrals. The findings indicate the complexity of the research question and have generated even more questions.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study presented was an exploratory one founded in the research literature on teacher referral decisions. The study was conducted in rural Alberta in six smaller schools due to the uniqueness of the rural situation and the dearth of Canadian research literature in this area.

As suspected, teacher referral decisions are complex and not always related to the needs of the child. In several instances it appeared that the referral decision was made based on the needs of the teacher and/or the teacher's perception of the needs of the community. This was not an unexpected finding but a rather disappointing one.

The research findings presented here are only one piece of evidence regarding the complexity encountered when attempting to determine what factors influence teachers' referral decisions. Overall, they indicate the possible need for an alternate approach to the identification and referral of special needs students. Several alternate referral models may be found in the research literature (Graden et al., 1985; Reynolds et al., 1987); Alberta Education and the school districts involved in the study might find some value in investigating these models further.

Graden et al.'s (1985) model is based on service delivery in which resources are directed at providing intervention assistance at the point of referral. The goal of this model is to reduce inappropriate referrals for testing and in turn special education placements. The principals of the schools participating in this investigation concluded that the pre-referral assistance increased teacher tolerance and competence to work with various groups of students. The researcher's concluded that this kind of model makes teachers aware that there are no quick cures but rather that solutions can be generated through the process of complex problem solving. A version of this model is currently being used in some schools, and is referred to as the Teacher Assistant Team (TAT).

The overall findings of the current study are discussed in detail in the following. The format is similar to that found in Chapter II.

Child-dependent Variables

The four child-dependent characteristics of gender, ethnicity, attractiveness and socioeconomic status were each paired with the variables of inappropriate behavior and low academic achievement, respectively. These characteristics, over which the child has no control, and the variables over which the child may have some control were presented to the respondents in the form of sixteen randomly ordered vignettes. The respondents were asked to make a referral decision on the children based on the information presented in the vignettes. A statistical analysis divided the respondents into the two groups of referring and non-referring teachers.

Gender

The teachers in this study appeared to be much more likely to refer girls with inappropriate behavior than boys. This finding is different than those found in most of the research literature. Other studies have indicated that girls with inappropriate behaviors were often viewed positively by their teachers and perceived to have higher intelligence and better behavior (Jackson & Lahadern, 1967). Brophy and Good (1970) concluded that teachers in their study had a lower tolerance for boys with inappropriate behavior than girls.

This finding is possibly a reflection of the rural nature of the communities involved in the study. Further it may be an attempt on the teachers' part to socialize these girls into roles more commonly found in smaller Alberta towns. The finding is similar to that of Woolridge & Richman (1985) which was that strong cultural gender stereotyping exists in the classroom. The finding of possible gender stereotyping was disturbing, and possibly indicates the need for extensive career education programs for girls in rural Alberta. Further investigation appears to be indicated into the question of:

"Do other teachers in rural Alberta schools refer more girls than boys with inappropriate behavior and if so Why?"

Gender also appeared to be combining with low academic achievement to result in a referral. It is interesting to note that eighteen percent of the respondents referred more girls than boys. It appears that not only do teachers appear to expect girls to be better behaved but also teachers are more concerned when girls are not achieving. The findings suggest that girls tend to be referred more often than boys and that Elementary teachers have differential expectations of girls and boys similar to Finn's 1972 findings. However, in this study girls as opposed to boys were referred much more often than boys due to inappropriate behavior or low academic achievement.

The finding leads one to question the use of vignettes in determining factors affecting teachers' referral decisions. Although the teachers' responses indicated the much greater likelihood of a girl being referred, in reality this is not the case. In these school districts boys are referred three to six times as often as girls. The question emerges:

"Do other teachers in rural Alberta have differential expectations of girls and boys and if so Why?"

Ethnicity

Ethnicity combined with inappropriate behavior or low academic achievement did appear to produce a referral in this study. Non-Caucasian children were referred over sixteen percent more often than Caucasian children due to behavioral difficulties. Whether this was a bias against or towards the Non-Caucasian children was not determined; however, it is clear that the teachers in this study were much less accepting of the Non-Caucasian child with inappropriate behavior.

In contrast, twenty-one percent more respondents referred Caucasian children than Non-Caucasian due to low academic achievement. This finding raises a variety of questions; Do teachers feel that only Caucasians can benefit from an academic referral and have lower expectations of Non-Caucasian children? There appear to be similarities in teacher referral decisions between Canadian and American teachers. The current findings are very similar to those of Richmond & Waits (1978) who reported significantly higher numbers of Non-Caucasian being referred for behavior problems as opposed to academic problems. Richmond & Waits study group consisted of Caucasian and Black students.

It appears that teachers had differential behavioral and achievement expectations of Caucasian and Non-Caucasian children. Herbert et al. (1984) also found teacher bias based upon ethnicity, although, as this was a Canadian study, the population was limited to Caucasian and Native children. The current findings indicate that teacher bias may not be limited to Native children alone but may include any Non-Caucasian group.

Other researchers (Tobias and Zibrin, 1983) have suggested that the teachers' ethnicity was a factor which interacted with the child's ethnicity. This area requires further investigation. Unfortunately, the respondents in this study were not asked to report their ethnicity; however, the large majority of respondents were Caucasian. The results of this study could be further substantiated by asking:

"Do other rural Alberta teachers have differential expectations of behavior and academic achievement based on the child's ethnicity and/or the teachers' ethnicity?

Socioeconomic Status

High socioeconomic status and inappropriate behavior resulted in nineteen percent more respondent referrals than did low socioeconomic status and inappropriate behavior. Teachers appear to believe that only children of high socioeconomic status need be referred implying that they have different behavioral expectations of lower socioeconomic children. This finding has not been investigated thoroughly in the literature, unfortunately, few studies have focused in on the differences in referral dependent on the combination of behavior and socioeconomic status. However in a related study, Kavale (1980) found that children of lower socioeconomic status were found in classes for the mentally handicapped and the behaviorally disordered while children of higher socioeconomic status were found in classes for the learning disabled. The question emerges as to whether this finding is possibly another indication of an attempt by the teachers' to better socialize children into their perceived future roles?

Children with low socioeconomic status and low academic achievement were referred by approximately 81 percent of the teachers and the children with high socioeconomic status and low academic achievement were referred by only approximately 27 percent of the respondents, a difference of approximately 54 percent. This finding is similar to that of Rubin et al.'s (1973), who found that socioeconomic status was the only factor that significantly differentiated between the children found in special education classes and regular education classes, regardless of intelligence and achievement being held constant.

Again, teachers exhibited different expectations of children based on a variable over which the child had no control. Teachers appear to believe that a referral will benefit a child of high socioeconomic status only if the child has inappropriate behavior. Further teachers appeared to be willing to accept more inappropriate behaviors from the low socioeconomic child but would refer this child for low academic achievement. The implication appears to be that the classroom teacher would prefer to work with the child of high socioeconomic status and/or perhaps felt that the child's socioeconomic status would somehow make up for their weak academic achievement. It appears that teachers have not changed in this respect, in the past twenty years, Bergan & Smith (1966) found that teachers judged academic competence and intellectual level solely on the child's socioeconomic status. In conclusion, teachers do appear to discriminate between both children of high and low socioeconomic status. A future investigation might ask:

"Do other rural Alberta teachers have differential behavioral and academic expectations of children of differing socioeconomic status?"

Attractiveness

Attractive children were not perceived as in need of a referral for inappropriate behavior, in fact 86 percent of the respondents did not refer this child. In contrast, approximately a quarter of the respondents did refer the unattractive child with inappropriate behavior. This finding is similar to that of Ross & Salvia (1975) in which the unattractive children were perceived as significantly different than attractive children in that they would experience more behavior problems due to peer relationships.

Respondents did not appear to discriminate between the attractive and unattractive child with low academic achievement and both children were referred by a relatively equal number of respondents. This finding is different from that found in a variety of studies in the research literature, (Salvia et al., 1977; Clifford & Walster, 1973; Adams & Cohen, 1974). The teachers in the current study as whole were older more experienced teachers which may have had an effect on these results.

Thus, it appears that teachers have a higher tolerance for attractive children with behavior problems than for unattractive children with behavior problems.

Attractiveness did not emerge as one of the factors which appeared to indicate different expectations by teachers with regard to attractive and unattractive children's academic achievement. The question:

"Do other rural Alberta teachers have a higher tolerance of inappropriate behaviors from attractive children?"

Summary

Teachers in this study exhibited differential expectations of children on all four child-dependent characteristics when they were combined with inappropriate behavior or low academic achievement. The child most likely to be referred appears to be a Non-Caucasian, unattractive girl of low socioeconomic status with inappropriate behavior and low academic achievement. The child most unlikely to be referred is an attractive Caucasian boy of high socioeconomic status with weak academic achievement.

Conclusion

Child-dependent characteristics and variables do appear to be differentially influencing teachers' referral decisions. This particular study was not extensive enough to determine the powerfulness of each characteristic and/or variable, nor did the study attempt to include all of the various combinations of characteristics and variables.

It would be inappropriate to draw any definite conclusions from the information provided by the respondents in this study with respect to child-dependent characteristics. What can be stated is that the vignettes describing differing child-dependent characteristics in combination with differing child-dependent variables did produce results that indicate teachers have differential expectations of children based on characteristics over which the children have no control.

The implication is that teachers because of bias are perhaps a questionable referral agent of special needs children. Parents of these children might be less biased by these characteristics and thus perhaps should play a larger role in the referral procedure. Awareness of teacher bias could also make the professionals receiving the referral more cautious and discriminating with regards to special needs children.

The use of vignettes appealed to most respondents and the overall reaction to these was more positive than to the other sections of the questionnaire. Controlling the information presented in the vignettes and predicting the teachers' reactions to it is difficult. For example several respondents mentioned in a very maternal and protective way that they; could not refer the unattractive child because they, themselves, had experienced feelings of unattractiveness in school. It appears that not only might the teacher's ethnicity be interacting with the child's ethnicity as reported in other studies (Tobias, Cole, Zibrin, & Bodlakova, 1982) but possibly the teachers' perception of their own attractiveness, and the teachers' gender.

As concluded by Helton & Oakland (1977) child-dependent characteristics were clearly related to differing teacher attitudes, and in this study clearly related to differing teacher referral decisions. Further investigation of the entire area would appear to benefit all children and in particular special needs children.

With regard to the number of referrals by respondents due to behavior as opposed to academic achievement, this group of teachers made 27 percent more referrals of children with academic difficulties. This finding is not supported in the research literature. In the Coleman & Gilliam (1983) study which also used vignettes and a large number of respondents it was found that different types of behavior were found to be differentially disturbing to teachers. In another study, even the simple reference to a child's behavior problems was found to have a powerful influence on the teachers' decisions, (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981). Perhaps the teachers in the current study did not find the problem behaviors in these vignettes particularly disturbing.

In the last section of the questionnaire teachers were asked to describe a child they had previously referred. The results indicated that only a slightly higher percentage of teachers, 38.9 percent, mentioned a behavioral component in contrast to 37.2 percent of respondents making an academic comment. Most teachers, 78.6 percent, made both a behavioral and academic comment. This suggests that most teachers referred the child based on a combination of behavioral and academic difficulties, a combination which was not investigated in the vignettes.

It appears that further investigation of teachers' referral decisions to determine whether the academic or behavioral component is more powerful and/or if these two variables are only powerful when combined would provide additional valuable information.

Child-independent Variables

The child independent variables investigated included those thought to exist and supported in the research literature at a system-level, school-level and at an individual teacher-level. These variables were presented to the respondents in the form of a questionnaire. Respondents were asked to respond on a five point Likert-typed scale to 43 randomly ordered questions. Thirty-three of the 43 questions involved factors supported in the research literature as potentially influencing teachers referral decisions, and additional ten validating questions were included. Further information was gathered through the use of an open-ended question which asked the respondents to report any barriers and/or facilitators they perceived to making referrals.

System-Level Factors

System-level factors did appear to be influencing teachers' referral decisions in the current study. The majority of teachers in the study do not perceive the Provincial Department of Alberta Education in a leadership role, nor are they familiar with the government's role or regulations. Further they do not look to Alberta Education for guidance and/or assistance. It appears the regular classroom teacher has little knowledge or understanding of Alberta Education's role, and responsibilities. This finding should be of serious concern to all school districts involved. The most integral part of the referral process, the teacher, is isolated from the information and literature which could provide the guidance and structure to make better referral decisions. If Alberta Education truly believes the classroom teacher should have the primary responsibility for special needs children it appears they should also be responsible for conveying the appropriate information to the classroom teachers. However, it appears Alberta Education limits their responsibility to communicating with the school districts. It is then left to the discretion of the school districts to determine if and how much of this information is communicated to the regular classroom teacher. The result of this practice is obvious. Regular classroom teachers are left uninformed of the information which could assist them in becoming more knowledgeable. An interesting study could involve a survey to determine exactly where the literature produced for the regular classroom teacher by Alberta Education is stored in any one school and if anyone in the building knows of its existence.

The implication may be that, particularly in the rural districts involved in this study, although the regular classroom teacher has the primary referral responsibility and appears to accept this responsibility as indicated by the findings of this study, he/she is left uninformed of the information upon which he/she is asked to base a referral decision. A conclusion which may be drawn from this data is that Alberta Education appears to have failed to communicate with classroom teachers located in rural Alberta.

A possible solution to this dilemma might include requiring that school districts provide their teachers with the materials written by Alberta Education for the regular classroom teacher. Inservices on these materials might be an option left to the school districts' discretion. Currently few classroom teachers are in possession of the recent publications written for them, or in fact have any knowledge of their existence. Before Alberta Education contracts more work to be done in producing literature for the classroom teacher the question of how to get the material already produced in to the hands of regular classroom teachers should be addressed.

Mention of other funding bodies experiencing difficulty communicating with their school districts is found, occasionally in the literature; however, it is difficult to determine if Alberta's situation is unique in this respect or similar to other areas. More investigation of Alberta Education's communication strategies with the regular classroom teacher appears to be required. This would be a particularly interesting investigation in the rural communities of Alberta where there is little access to consultants and often the superintendent and/or principal is left to provide the educational leadership and guidelines in all areas.

The current study also indicated that the superintendents and principals appear to experience difficulty communicating their policies and procedures to teachers. If teachers were aware of the existence of policies and procedures to guide them in the referral of special needs children they often could not specify what these were. In a very real way this leaves the teacher in an exceptionally precarious position, in that the school board representing the parents of the community has approved and implemented certain policies and procedures but have left their staff relatively uninformed. The regular classroom teacher's decision to refer or not refer could be challenged at any time and the teacher would not have the appropriate information to defend the decision.

Perhaps Alberta Education, the superintendents and the principals all assume that the regular classroom teacher is cognizant of all necessary referral information and is making use of it on a regular basis. Friend & McNutt, (1987) in a related study, found a discrepancy between what teachers were actually doing and what administrators believed teachers were doing. The possible discrepancy between what is actually happening in schools on a day to day basis and what is expected to be happening is worthy of further investigation.

Other factors investigated in this section did not appear to be influencing the majority of teachers' referral decisions, as discussed in the previous chapter. Most teachers were aware of their referral responsibilities and were satisfied with the referral form used by the school district. Teachers described the assessment provided by the district as both a facilitator to them making a referral and as a barrier due to the time lapse involved between the referral and the assessment.

A final concern in this section emerged as worthy of further discussion, the worth of preparing Individualized Program Plans. Alberta Education requires that IPPs be generated to guide the program of all special needs children. Overall, only a small majority of teachers in this study perceived this practice as beneficial to themselves or the child. Meyan & Moran (1979) studying the effects of the IEP process on teachers' referrals provided similar findings. Whether or not this particular practice should be continued and to what degree is a question deserving of further attention by Alberta Education.

The findings of the current investigation were not unexpected nor unique to that found in the research literature. Christenson et al. (1983) also found that numerous system-level variables influenced teachers' referral decisions. The value of the current exploratory investigation lies in the demonstration of the necessity of examining system-level factors when investigating teachers' referral decisions.

School-Level Factors

School-level factors were involved in teachers' referral decisions in this particular study. These factors involved the resource room services provided in the school, the principal's attitude towards referrals, and the possible effect of labelling within the school.

Overall the teachers in this study expressed a very positive and supportive attitude towards the resource room services provided in their schools. Concerns regarding the resource room services appeared to be limited to the availability of space in the resource room and the program offered. Regular classroom teachers did not appear to be well informed of a number of aspects of the resource room program but appeared to be satisfied with the academic transfer achieved by their students.

The principal's attitude in all schools towards referral was reported by teachers as positive. Other studies, (Goupil & Brunet, 1984; Robbins et al., 1967), have reported the principals' attitude as a major factor in teachers' referral decisions, it can only be assumed in this study that the principals' positive attitude was a facilitating factor to teachers making referrals.

The possibility of children being labelled because of attendance in the resource room was a concern expressed by a significant number of teachers both in the barriers to referral and the responses to the questions posed in this section. This issue should be addressed at the school level and creative alternatives generated to resolve it. Some schools use their resource room for a variety of purposes including enrichment. Perhaps more teacher education is required to dispel the perceived stigma attached to the resource room. The regular classroom teacher may need to be more involved in the individualized planning or other aspects of the resource room program. If teachers' perceived more ownership in the resource room program and its benefits to their students this could possibly eliminate their concerns regarding labelling.

In summary, school-level factors appeared to have the potential to influence teachers' referral decisions. Any future investigations should be sensitive to these factors and possibly attempt to discover other factors at this level.

Teacher-related Factors

Teachers' knowledge and opinions appeared to have an effect on their referral decisions. Overall, most teachers had a positive attitude towards and accepted the responsibility of making referrals. The referral appeared to be perceived by teachers as beneficial to both the child and the teacher. The teachers reported familiarity with the referral procedure and with the information required to identify special needs children at their grade level. Teachers stated that referrals of children should be made prior to January and that they should not only be for children who are in danger of being retained for an additional year. Most teachers reported that they would make a referral based on concerns about a child's homelife.

Teachers reported a positive attitude toward contacting parents and making referrals based on parents' concerns. The majority of teachers in this study did not feel pressured by the demands of the curriculum or that the curriculum superseded teaching the children as individuals.

Teachers reported familiarity with the entrance criteria and the type of program offered in the resource room. They did not report any difficulties related to regular class programing and/or evaluation as a result of children leaving to attend the resource room program. Teachers did not appear to perceive the resource room as a personal time saver nor as an appropriate placement for the disruptive child.

Unfortunately, teachers did not perceive any need to refer a child suspected of having special needs, if in fact the child was achieving. Indicating the possibility that teachers perceive the referral only to be necessary if it will in some way benefit the teacher or that a referral in some way indicates a rejection of the child by the teacher or any number of other possibilities. Perhaps teachers believe their role to be limited to information-giver as opposed to a more wholistic view as child advocates. Regardless, it appears that further investigation into this question would be advisable, if we intend to meet the needs of children.

A majority of teachers reported that the size of their class might be reflected in their referral decisions. Where classes are perceived as overloaded the teachers are more likely to make referrals.

A final, rather disturbing, finding was that teachers report that they do not consider their colleagues' opinions when making referral decisions. The teachers involved in the current study are isolated from any kind of consultative personnel and/or information, and few of the schools carry any professional literature on to special needs children. Yet the majority of teachers in this study would not allow the only other professionals' opinion which they may have access to, their colleagues' opinions, to influence their referral decision. It is difficult to comment further on this finding other than to say it is of grave concern with respect to the referral of special needs children. One hopes that this is not one of the findings which will be replicated in future research.

Conclusion

Initially, the investigation began with the premise that the referral decision clearly rested with the regular classroom teacher, individually. Any error in referral decisions was possibly due to the teachers' time constraints, their difficulty sharing responsibility for special needs children and/or lack of information. During the investigation another teacher-related factor emerged; the factor of teacher reluctance to make an issue of their perceptions. Some teachers are aware of their lack of information and are reluctant to make a referral decision as a result, some teachers are hesitant to refer because of fear of reprisals from parents, and some teachers do not refer in case they make the child's life more difficult. Unfortunately, this factor was not discovered until well into the investigation and was not included as a part of the investigation. Its inclusion is recommended in to any further investigation of factors affecting teachers' referral decisions.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

An investigation into teachers' referral decisions indicates that the issue is much more complex than it appears at first glance. The suspected and/or potential special needs of the children do not necessarily dictate the teachers' referral decisions. This investigation has demonstrated that teachers are influenced by both child-dependent and child-independent factors. All of the child-dependent factors included in the study resulted in producing different expectations by the teachers. Many of the child-independent factors included also appeared to be influencing teachers' referral decisions, including those at the system-level, the school-level and the individual teacher-level.

Future studies in this area might include investigating the relationships between teacher referrals and the child-dependent and child-independent factors discussed here. The results of this investigation raised some serious questions as to the advisability of depending upon regular classroom teachers as the primary referral agents of special needs children.

The format used to gather the information was lengthy; however, each of the five original sections yielded valuable information. The section containing the 43 Likert-type questions in combination with the first section regarding individual teachers' education and experience provided statistical data to support differences between the referral patterns of teachers with varying degrees of education and experience as well as a differences between Division I and Division II teachers.

The open-ended questions regarding barriers and/or facilitators to referrals produced additional data not found in the research literature regarding child-independent factors which influenced teachers' referral decisions. This section also allowed the respondents to directly communicate their concerns without being limited by the breadth of the investigation.

The vignettes were successful in exhibiting the influence of child-dependent characteristics on teachers' referral decisions. They provided an extremely interesting approach to gathering data and were well received by the respondents.

The final section of the questionnaire which asked the teacher to describe a child whom they had previously referred furnished information which the teacher perceived as influential in making a referral decision. Some of the teachers reported child-independent characteristics which could be used in creating new vignettes.

In conclusion, the format used to gather the information was considered satisfactory for the purposes of this study. It appears that the four final sections could be used either independently or in combination with the first section to further determine the veracity of each of the factors involved in teachers' referral decisions.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher Referral Decisions
PILOT

Factors Effecting Teachers' Referral Decisions

(Pilot)

Instructions: Please mark the appropriate blank.

Teaching Experience in years	__1 to 3	__3 to 10	__Over 10
Average # of students	__Under 20	__21 to 26	__Over 26
# of Referrals made in the past 3 years	__0	__1 to 5	__Over 5
Grades taught	__1 to 3	__4 to 6	__Other
Training in Special Education	__Inservices	__University courses	__None
Training in Early Childhood	__Inservices	__University courses	__None
Experience with Children on Individual Program Plans		__Some	__None

Instructions: Please circle the number which most accurately reflects your feelings.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. Parents do not influence my referral decisions. 1 2 3 4 5
2. In my school district it is the teachers responsibility to identify special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Each year the receiving teacher has to re-refer children who have special needs and require resource room assistance. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a smaller class as they will know the students needs better. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Assessment information often provides me with helpful information for understanding the child and his individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Serious academic remediation takes place in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5
7. The child will recive just as good or better quality help in my room as in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I am familiar with the referral form in our school. 1 2 3 4 5
9. Making a referral is often the first step of a positive change for the child. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I am familiar with the types of programs offered in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Children leaving to go to resource room leads to serious difficulties with classroom programming and evaluation. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Children requiring resource room assistance are not treated differently by the other children. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I am familiar with the observable symptoms of special needs children at my grade level. 1 2 3 4 5
14. The Department of Education regulations stipulate the necessity of screening school populations for special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

Teacher Referral Decisions
PILOT

15. Children are moved in and out of the resource room on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. 1 2 3 4 5

16. Children suspected of having special needs often slip through a few grades before being recognized. 1 2 3 4 5

17. My principal frowns on teachers who can't handle the students placed in their classes. 1 2 3 4 5

18. Regular class teachers are not informed about the programs offered in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5

19. A child's life outside of school is not a reason to make a referral. 1 2 3 4 5

20. Referring a child for a psychoeducational assessment rarely provides me with any new information about the child. 1 2 3 4 5

21. Once a child is placed in the resource room it is difficult for them to be re-integrated into the regular class. 1 2 3 4 5

22. The program offered in the resource room tends to involve a lot of play. 1 2 3 4 5

23. Contacting parents about difficulties their child may be having is one of the first steps I take. 1 2 3 4 5

24. The resource room can offer more assistance to the child than he can receive in a regular classroom. 1 2 3 4 5

25. I can accommodate children receiving resource room assistance in my plans. 1 2 3 4 5

26. It is not the regular class teacher's responsibility to look for pupils with special needs. 1 2 3 4 5

27. A child suspected of having special needs should be referred even if he is achieving. 1 2 3 4 5

28. The resource room offers the children in the regular class a break from a disruptive child. 1 2 3 4 5

29. My principal's attitude towards referrals encourages me to make referrals. 1 2 3 4 5

30. I am familiar with the criteria for admittance to the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5

31. If a student is placed in the resource room it will often require too much additional time on the part of the regular class teacher. 1 2 3 4 5

32. In my situation, teaching the curriculum has to take priority over students' individual difficulties. 1 2 3 4 5

33. The number of available placements in the resource room in our school is limited. 1 2 3 4 5

34. I am not sure of the information needed to complete a referral form. 1 2 3 4 5

35. No specific method is employed to identify and refer children with

Teacher Referral Decisions
PILOT

special needs in our school 1 2 3 4 5

36. Disruptive children do not belong in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5

37. I tend to make referrals based on my intuitive feelings about students. 1 2 3 4 5

38. In my school district a child who received resource room assistance in the previous year will automatically continue in resource room without a referral from me. 1 2 3 4 5

39. The referral form used is difficult and time-comsuming to complete. 1 2 3 4 5

40. It is not really clear to me who qualifies for resource room assistance. 1 2 3 4 5

41. Regular class teachers are responsible to teach any student assigned to their class. 1 2 3 4 5

42. There is always room in the resource room for a child in need. 1 2 3 4 5

43. Children suspected of having special needs should be referred in the first month of school. 1 2 3 4 5

44. If a student is placed in the resource room it saves time planning for individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5

45. Regular class teachers are unsure as to the behaviors and/or characteristics of special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

46. Individualized Program Plans are useful in programming. 1 2 3 4 5

47. Others opinions about students rarely influence my decisions. 1 2 3 4 5

48. Meeting each individual's needs comes first in my class. 1 2 3 4 5

49. Alberta Education does not require the identification of special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

50. My school district has policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of children with special needs. 1 2 3 4 5

51. Children who attend resource room are often labelled by the other children. 1 2 3 4 5

52. I realize that special services are required by some of my students. 1 2 3 4 5

53. It is very difficult for the regular class teacher to contact parents and try to explain their child's problem. 1 2 3 4 5

54. I am not sure if there is a set referral procedure at our school. 1 2 3 4 5

55. A child should not be referred unless he is in danger of failing the grade. 1 2 3 4 5

56. It is difficult to refer a child much before March as I don't know him well enough until then. 1 2 3 4 5

57. Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a large class, as they will have difficulty meeting individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5

58. If I make a referral it will do the child more harm than good. 1 2 3 4 5

59. If the child has special needs someone else would have referred the child before me. 1 2 3 4 5

60. Other teachers opinions effect my referral decisions. 1 2 3 4 5

61. I have a set of both formal and informal criteria which I use to identify special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

62. Concerns about the child s home life might cause me to make a referral. 1 2 3 4 5

63. Parents expressing concerns might cause me to make a referral. 1 2 3 4 5

64. The present system of preparing Individualized Program Plans is often not worth the effort. 1 2 3 4 5

65 The referral form used allows me a chance to clarify the reason for the referral and share my observations. 1 2 3 4 5

66. I am familiar with the referral procedure in our school. 1 2 3 4 5

Instructions: Teachers in similar studies have been asked to comment on the barriers to and factors facilitating referrals. space is provided below for your specific comments on these elements.

Barriers ______________________________

Facilitating
Factors ______________________________

Teacher Referral Decisions
PILOT

Instructions: Please read the following vignettes and decide whether you would refer the child described for psychoeducational assessment. If you would refer the child mark **YES**, if you would not refer mark **NO**, and if you would be unable to make a decision please **STATE** the additional information you would require to make a decision.

1. Doug is all out of proportion, his head is oversized for his body and his ears and nose are oversized for his head. Although I am teaching the average class this year, he was placed in mine because the slower class's numbers were too high. Not only does he struggle with his school work but the children are always calling him "Ugly Dougly".

YES__ NO__

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION____

2. Lorraine Smith is a new student in my class. When I contacted the teacher from her previous school she wished me luck. I got the distinct impression that her previous teacher was glad she transferred. Apparently what I thought were settling-in problems, demanding attention and acting out, are typical and persistent kinds of behaviors with Lorraine.

YES__ NO__

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION____

3. Jennifer is always speaking out and interupting. She is aggressive and pushy with the other children. If things don't go her way she explodes, reasoning with her doesn't seem to help. Jennifer takes more of my time and energy than any five other children.

YES__ NO__

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION____

4. Jody has everything from the latest calculator watch to a home computer. His mom and dad are both lawyers and have bought a lot of educational software to help him at home. It has improved his work a little but I couldn't honestly say that he is an average student. Maybe he is just playing games on that computer.

YES__ NO__

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION____

5. Chris is always taking the other children's things. I know he may have very little and that Dad just quit another job but Chris has to learn not to steal. When the other students do give him part of their lunch or a pencil he shows no gratitude and the next moment he could be hitting them. He is very demanding and always wants to be the center of attention. I waste a lot of time and energy just trying to control Chris.

YES__ NO__

ADDITIONAL

INFORMATION____

6. Kelsey White is your "Disney Movie" kind of child. She is petite and very pretty. She has already learned to use her looks to her advantage. Most of the girls want to be her friend even though she has to have her own way or she cries. She doesn t cry that much in class but has all sorts of other ways to constantly demand attention.

ADDITIONAL **YES**__ **NO**__
INFORMATION____

7. Ling Chu just doesn t seem to be making any progress this year. Her marks range from low average to below average. From what I ve observed she may not be capable of doing any better. She seems to have friends and be accepted by the children even though she is one of the few Vietnamese children in our school.

ADDITIONAL **YES**__ **NO**__
INFORMATION____

8. Darren s parents are his worst enemy. When I try to explain that his behaviors are inappropriate and disruptive to the class as well as himself. they insist that there is a personality conflict or that maybe I m not giving him enough attention. or that maybe the rules are too strict. When I try to explain that his work is below average then the school standards are too high. They have had a tutor for him for over six months and he is still well behind the rest of the class.

ADDITIONAL **YES**__ **NO**__
INFORMATION____

9. Michael is consistently out of his desk and when he is in his desk he s making noises or playing with something. Not only do his antics interupt and distract me but most of the class is disrupted. The other children don t like his bossy. bully behavior.

ADDITIONAL **YES**__ **NO**__
INFORMATION____

10. Hopefully. Grant s good looks will carry him to places where his academics can t. Already you can tell that he s going to develop into a handsome young man. Grant may have to be retained this year if his marks don t pick-up. Maybe in high school he ll be good at football but I have my doubts that he ll be able to learn the different plays.

ADDITIONAL **YES**__ **NO**__
INFORMATION____

11. Christine experiences little success in school. Each report card she receives below average marks. Comprehension of concepts in all subject areas is difficult for her.

ADDITIONAL **YES**__ **NO**__

Teacher Referral Decisions
PILOT

INFORMATION______________________________

12. Mark Jones has made little academic progress this year. His reading is slow and he stumbles over the words, even the ones he knows. He came to me below grade level and I've seen little improvement. I'm not sure he even knows any math facts. He s hesitant to ask questions and I often don t realize until too late that he s gotten lost.

YES__ **NO**__

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION______________________________

13. Rhonda Slugge never stops. I'm sure she is always dropping things just so she can get out of her desk to get them. I can t count the number of times she breaks her pencil in a day. Why such an unattractive child would constantly be doing things to make people look at her I can t imagine.

YES__ **NO**__

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION______________________________

14. It is difficult to see Ryan come in each day in the same clothes looking hungry. What little lunch he has is usually gone by recess. He is one of my weakest students but he seems to enjoy coming to school. On the last set of standardized tests he was over a year below grade level.

YES__ **NO**__

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION______________________________

15 I always thought native children were fairly passive and well behaved prior to meeting Randy Littlebear. Randy rarely raises his hand to ask anything, instead he just shouts it out. when he s frustrated he swears and kicks the kids or desks around him. Unfortunately, his attendence to date has been perfect, mine may soon drop-off.

YES__ **NO**__

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION______________________________

16. Jeff understands much less of what I teach than the average child. His academic achievement is consistently below average. I m not sure whether or not I'll be able to pass him in light of his performance.

YES__ **NO**__

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION______________________________

Instructions: Please describe a child you have referred below.

____

____

____

____

____

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF PILOT

PILOT STUDY INCLUDED 11 RESPONDENTS 3 MALE 8 FEMALE

Teaching Experience in years	1 1 to 3	5 3 to 10	5 Over 10
Average # of student	3 Under 20	6 21 to 26	2 Over 26
# of Referrals made in the past 3 years	2 0	7 1 to 5	2 Over 5
Grades taught	8 1 to 3	5 4 to 6	1 Other
Training in Special Education	3 Inservices	2 University courses	6 None
Training in Early Childhood	1 Inservices	6 University courses	5 None
Experience with Children on Individual Program Plans		8 Some	3 None

	1	2	3	4	5	
1. a) Q#66	1	8	1	1	0	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b) Q#54	0	2	0	7	2	
2. a) Q#13	1	8	2	1	0	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b) Q#45	0	3	1	5	2	
3. a) Q#32	0	3	1	2	5	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b) Q#48	1	7	1	2	0	
4. a) Q#53	0	2	0	6	3	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b) Q#23	5	5	0	1	0	1 answered both Q's with 4's
5. a) Q#55	0	0	0	7	4	2 answered both Q's with 4's
b) Q#27	0	6	3	2	0	
6. a) Q#56	0	1	0	6	4	4 answered both Q's with 4's
b) Q#43	1	3	1	5	1	
7. a) Q#57	1	1	2	6	1	3 answered both Q's with 4's
b) Q#4	2	1	2	5	1	1 answered both Q's with 5's
8. a) Q#58	0	0	2	4	5	2 answered both Q's with 3's
b) Q#9	3	3	3	2	0	2 answered both Q's with 4's
9. a) Q#59	0	0	0	7	4	3 answered both Q's with 4's
b) Q#16	0	6	0	5	0	

3

10.	a) Q*60	0	3	3	5	1	2 answered both Q's with 3's
	b) Q*47	1	2	5	3	0	1 answered both Q's with 4's
11.	a) Q*22	0	0	5	5	1	1 answered both Q's with 4's
	b) Q*6	2	4	3	2	0	
12.	a) Q*33	3	6	0	0	2	1 answered both Q's with 1's
	b) Q*42	1	5	1	3	1	4 answered both Q's with 2's
							1 answered both Q's with 5's
13.	a) Q*51	1	6	1	3	1	NO OVERLAP
	b) Q*12	2	2	0	7	0	
14.	a) Q*41	1	8	1	1	0	1 answered both Q's with 1's
	b) Q*52	4	6	0	1	0	5 answered both Q's with 2's
15.	a) Q*10	1	10	0	0	0	3 answered both Q's with 2's
	b) Q*18	0	4	2	4	1	
16.	a) Q*11	1	1	0	6	3	1 answered both Q's with 2's
	b) Q*25	2	9	0	0	0	
17.	a) Q*28	1	5	0	4	1	1 answered both Q's with 2's
	b) Q*36	0	2	1	6	2	2 answered both Q's with 4's
18.	a) Q*31	0	0	1	9	1	3 answered both Q's with 4's
	b) Q*44	1	3	1	4	3	1 answered both Q's with 5's
19.	a) Q*30	1	9	1	0	0	NO OVERLAP
	b) Q*40	0	3	1	9	1	
20.	a) Q*8	5	5	1	0	0	NO OVERLAP
	b) Q*34	1	0	0	8	2	
21.	a) Q*49	0	2	2	6	1	2 answered both Q's with 3's
	b) Q*14	1	2	7	0	1	
22.	a) Q*2	4	6	0	0	1	1 answered both Q's with 5's
	b) Q*26	0	0	2	4	5	

23. a)	Q*50	1	8	1	0	1	1 answered both Q's with 1's
b)	Q*35	1	2	1	6	1	2 answered both Q's with 2's
							1 answered both Q's with 5's
24. a)	Q*38	0	1	3	5	2	1 answered both Q's with 3's
b)	Q*3	2	0	3	6	0	3 answered both Q's with 4's
25. a)	Q*20	0	4	1	6	0	2 answered both Q's with 2's
b)	Q*5	3	5	2	1	0	
26. a)	Q*39	0	1	0	9	1	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b)	Q*65	1	8	2	0	0	
27. a)	Q*64	0	2	7	1	1	2 answered both Q's with 2's
b)	Q*46	2	7	2	0	0	2 answered both Q's with 3's
28. a)	Q*7	0	1	5	3	2	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b)	Q*24	3	6	2	0	0	1 answered both Q's with 3's
29. a)	Q*29	2	8	1	0	0	NO OVERLAP
b)	Q*17	0	0	1	9	1	
30. a)	Q*21	0	1	0	9	1	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b)	Q*15	2	6	1	2	0	2 answered both Q's with 4's
31. a)	Q*61	3	4	1	3	0	1 answered both Q's with 2's
b)	Q*37	0	5	2	4	0	1 answered both Q's with 3's
32. a)	Q*62	0	9	1	1	0	1 answered both Q's with 4's
b)	Q*19	0	0	1	7	3	
33. a)	Q*63	1	8	1	1	0	1 answered both Q's with 1's
b)	Q*1	1	3	1	4	2	2 answered both Q's with 2's

VIGNETTES	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Sex and Behavior			
1. a) Jennifer (#3)	4	5	2
b) Michael (#9)	2	7	2
Sex and Academics			
2. a) Christine (#11)	6	3	2
b) Jeff (#16)	6	2	3
Ethnicity and Behavior			
3. a) Lorraine (#2)	1	8	2
b) Randy (#15)	4	6	2
Ethnicity and Academics			
4. a) Mark (#12)	9	0	2
b) Ling (#7)	5	5	1
Socio-economic Status and Behavior			
5. a) Chris (#5)	4	6	1
b) Darren (#8)	8	2	1
Socio-economic Status and Academics			
6. a) Ryan (#14)	7	2	2
b) Jody (#4)	3	7	1
Attractiveness and Behavior			
7. a) Rhonda (#13)	3	7	1
b) Kelsey (#6)	3	7	1
Attractiveness and Academics			
8. a) Doug (#1)	4	4	3
b) Grant (#10)	4	4	3

BARRIERS TO REFERRALS

5 stated concerns about the resource room being full (O.A.N.X.P)
4 stated concerns about services being limited for referral (A.X.T.P0)
2 left a blank indication no barriers (A.J)
2 stated concerns about time between referral, testing and results (A.P)
2 stated concerns about the resource room teacher personally (A.D)
2 stated concerns about too much time being wasted in the resource room (H)
2 stated concerns about too little transfer from the resource room (H.M)
1 stated concerns about opposition from the principal (D)
1 stated concerns about opposition from parents (D)
1 stated concerns about the length and format of the referral form (N)

1 stated concerns about stigmas being attached to children in the resource room (N)
1 stated concerns about the teacher being unsure of who to refer (I)
1 stated concerns about the lack of understanding of her children by specialists (T)

FACILITATING FACTORS

5 stated nothing that facilitated referrals (B.H.J.P.M)
2 stated discussions with other teachers (D.I)
1 stated the resource room teacher personally (Q)
1 stated the advantage to her children of the small numbers (Q)
1 stated her own knowledge (A)
1 stated parental involvement (D)
1 stated availibility of services (N)
1 stated cooperative principals (I)
1 stated counsellors in the schools (I)
1 stated the positive results of the referral and follow-up services (T)

DESCRIPTIONS OF REFERRED CHILDREN

5 attending problems	(Q.N.I.T.P)
4 no response	(A.B.H.J)
3 immaturity	(Q.N.M)
3 bright child	(D.I.N)
3 girls	(Q.T.M)
3 boys	(D.N.I)
2 disruptive	(I.P)
2 below grade level	(P.M)
1 negative parents	(Q)
1 high socio-economic	(D)
1 absent alot	(D)
1 teacher frustration	(N)
1 finishing assignments	(N)
1 memory	(T)

4 teachers gave no descriptions of a referee but only 2 stated they had never made a referral

APPENDIX C

PAIRED QUESTIONS

Pairs of Questions Related
to
Factors Affecting Teachers' Referral Decisions

Instructions: Please mark the appropriate blank.

Teaching Experience in years	__1 to 3	__3 to 10	__Over 10
Average # of students	__Under 20	__21 to 26	__Over 26
# of Referrals made in the past 3 years	__0	__1 to 5	__Over 5
Grades taught	__1 to 3	__4 to 6	__Other
Training in Special Education	__Inservices	__University courses	__None
Training in Early Childhood	__Inservices	__University courses	__None
Experience with Children on Individual Program Plans		__Some	__None

Instructions: Please circle the number which most accurately reflects your feelings.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

(*) indicates questions to be used as a result of the pilot. First bracketed number is from the pilot.

System Related Questions

1. * a) Alberta Education does not require the identification of special needs children. (*49) (*25) 1 2 3 4 5

* b) The Department of Education regulations stipulate the necessity of screening school populations for special needs children. (*14) (*6) 1 2 3 4 5

2. * a) In my school district, it is the teachers responsibility to identify special needs children. (*2) (*1) 1 2 3 4 5

b) It is not the regular class teacher's responsibility to look for pupils with special needs. (*26) 1 2 3 4 5

3. * a) My school district has policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of children with special needs. (*50) (*29) 1 2 3 4 5

* b) No specific method is employed to identify and refer children with special needs in our school. (*39) (*20) 1 2 3 4 5

4. * a) In my school district a child who received resource room assistance in the previous year will automatically continue in resource room without a referral from me. (*35) (*21) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Each year the receiving teacher has to re-refer children who have special needs and require resource room assistance. (*3) 1 2 3 4 5

5. * a) Referring a child for further assessment rarely provides me with any new information about the child. (*20) (*10)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Assessment information often provides me with helpful information for understanding the child and his individual needs. (*5)	1	2	3	4	5
6. *a) The referral form used is too difficult and time-consuming to complete. (*39) (*22)	1	2	3	4	5
* b) The referral form used allows me a chance to share my observations and clarify the reason for the referral. (*65) (*43)	1	2	3	4	5
7. * a) The present system of preparing Individualized Program Plans is often not worth the effort. (*64) (*42)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Individualized Program Plans are useful in programming. (*46)	1	2	3	4	5

School Related Questions

5. *a) The child will usually receive just as good or better quality help in my room as in the resource room. (*7) (*2)	1	2	3	4	5
* b) The resource room offers more assistance to the child than he can receive in a regular classroom. (*24) (*15)	1	2	3	4	5
9. *a) My principal's attitude towards referrals encourages me to make referrals. (*29) (*16)	1	2	3	4	5
*b) My principal "frowns on" teachers who can't handle the students placed in their classes and ask for referrals. (*17) (*9)	1	2	3	4	5
10. a) Once a child is placed in the resource room it is difficult for them to be re-integrated into the regular class. (*21)	1	2	3	4	5
*b) Children are moved into and out of the resource room on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. (*15) (*7)	1	2	3	4	5
11. * a) The program offered in the resource room tends to involve a lot of play with little academic transfer back to my class. (*22) (*1)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Serious academic remediation takes place in the resource room. (*6)	1	2	3	4	5
12. a) The number of available placements in the resource room in our school is limited. (*33)	1	2	3	4	5
* b) There is always room in the resource room for another child. (*42) (*24)	1	2	3	4	5
13.*a) Children who attend resource room are often labelled by the other children. (*31) (*30)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Children requiring resource room assistance are not treated differently by the other children. (*12)	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Related Questions

14.*a) Regular class teachers are expected to teach any student assigned to their class without making referrals. (*41) (*23) 1 2 3 4 5

*b) I realize that referrals to special services are required by some of my students to enable them to attain success. (*52) (*31) 1 2 3 4 5

15.*a) I am familiar with the types of programs offered in the resource room. (*10) (*3) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Regular class teachers are not informed about the programs offered in the resource room. (*15) 1 2 3 4 5

16.*a) Children leaving to go to resource room leads to serious difficulties with classroom programming and evaluation. (*11) (*4) 1 2 3 4 5

b) I can accommodate children receiving resource room assistance in my plans. (*25) 1 2 3 4 5

17.* a) Resource room placement for a disruptive child is appropriate as it benifits the children in the regular class. (*28) (*13) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Disruptive children do not belong in the resource room. (*36) 1 2 3 4 5

18. a) If a student is placed in the resource room it will often require too much additional time on the part of the regular class teacher. (*31) 1 2 3 4 5

*b) If a student is placed in the resource room it saves time planning for individual needs. (*44) (*26) 1 2 3 4 5

19.* a) I am familiar with the criteria for admittance to the resource room. (*30) (*17) 1 2 3 4 5

b) It is not really clear to me who qualifies for resource room assistance. (*40) 1 2 3 4 5

20. a) I am familiar with the referral form in our school. (*8) 1 2 3 4 5

*b) I am unclear as to the information needed to complete a referral form. (*34) (*19) 1 2 3 4 5

21. a) I am familiar with the referral procedure in our school. (*66) 1 2 3 4 5

*b) I am not aware of a set referral procedure at our school. (*54) (*32) 1 2 3 4 5

22.* a) I am familiar with the observable symptoms of special needs children at my grade level. (*13) (*5) 1 2 3 4 5

*b) I am unsure as to the behaviors and/or characteristics of special needs children. (*45) (*27) 1 2 3 4 5

23.*a) In my situation, teaching the curriculum must take priority over students' individual needs. (*32) (*18) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Meeting each individual's needs comes first in my class. (*43) 1 2 3 4 5

24. a) It is very difficult for the regular class teacher to contact parents and try to explain their child's problem. (*53) 1 2 3 4 5

* b) Contacting parents about their child's difficulties is one of the first steps I take, prior to referral. (*23) (*12) 1 2 3 4 5

25. *a) A child should be referred only if he is in danger of failing the grade. (*55) (*33) 1 2 3 4 5

*b) A child suspected of having special needs should be referred even if he is achieving. (*27) (*14) 1 2 3 4 5

26.*a) It is difficult to refer a child before January as a teacher doesn't know him well enough until then. (*56) (*34) 1 2 3 4 5

* b) Children suspected of having special needs should be referred early in the school year. (*43) (*25) 1 2 3 4 5

27. *a) Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a large class, as they will have difficulty meeting individual needs. (*57) (*35) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a smaller class as they will know their students needs better. (*4) 1 2 3 4 5

28. *a) A referral will do the child more harm than good. (*58) (*36) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Making a referral is often the first step of a positive change for the child. (*9) 1 2 3 4 5

29.* a) If the child has special needs someone else would have referred the child before me. (*59) (*37) 1 2 3 4 5

* b) Children suspected of having special needs often slip through a few grades before being recognized. (*16) (*8) 1 2 3 4 5

30.* a) Other teachers' opinions affect my referral decisions. (*60) (*38) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Others opinions about students rarely influence my decisions. (*47) 1 2 3 4 5

31.* a) I have a set of both formal and informal criteria which I use to identify special needs children. (*61) (*39) 1 2 3 4 5

b) I tend to make referrals based on my intuitive feelings about students. (*37) 1 2 3 4 5

32.* a) Concerns about the child's home life might cause me to make a referral. (*62) (*40) 1 2 3 4 5

b) A child's life outside of school is not a reason to make a referral. (*19) 1 2 3 4 5

33.*a) Parents expressing concerns might cause me to make a referral. (*63) (*50) 1 2 3 4 5

b) Parents do not influence my referral decisions. (*1) 1 2 3 4 5

(Some changes in the wording of questions are also included in the above as compared to the original used in the pilot study.)

Instructions: Teachers in similar studies have been asked to comment on the barriers to and factors which facilitate referrals. Space is provided below for your specific comments on these elements.

Barriers:

Facilitating Factors:

Child Related Vignettes

Instructions: Please read the following vignettes and decide whether you would refer the child described for further assessment by a specialist (e.g. psychologist, nurse, counsellor). If you would refer the child mark **YES**, if you would not refer mark **NO**. If you would be unable to make a decision please **STATE** the additional information you would require to make a referral decision.

1. Sex and Behavior

a) Jennifer is always speaking out and interrupting. She is aggressive and pushy with the other children. If things don't go her way she explodes, reasoning with her doesn't seem to help. Jennifer takes more of my time and energy than any five other children. (*3)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

b) Michael is consistently out of his desk and when he is in his desk he's making noises or playing with something. Not only do his antics interrupt and distract me but most of the class is disrupted. The other children don't like his bossy, bully behavior. (*9)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

2. Sex and Academics

a) Christine experiences little success in school. Each report card she receives below average marks. Comprehension of concepts in all subject areas is difficult for her, and I am considering retention. (*11)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

b) Jeff understands much less of what I teach than the average child. His academic achievement is consistently below average. I'm not sure whether or not I'll be able to pass him in light of his performance. (*16)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

a) It is difficult to see Ryan come in each day in the same clothes looking hungry. What little lunch he has is usually gone by recess. He is one of my weakest students but he seems to enjoy coming to school. On the last set of standardized tests he was over a year below grade level. (#14)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

b) Jody has everything from the latest calculator watch to a home computer. His mom and dad are both lawyers and have bought a lot of educational software to help him at home. It has improved his work a little but I couldn't honestly say that he is even an average student. Maybe he is just playing games on that computer. (#4)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

7. Attractiveness and Behavior

a) Rhonda Slugge never stops. I'm sure she is always dropping things just so she can get out of her desk to get them. I can't count the number of times she breaks her pencil in a day. Why such an unattractive child would constantly be doing things to make people look at her I can't imagine. (#13)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

b) Kelsey White is your "Disney Movie" kind of child. She is petite and very pretty. She has already learned to use her looks to her advantage. Most of the girls want to be her friend even though she has to have her own way or she cries. She doesn't cry that much in class but has all sorts of other ways to constantly demand attention. (#6)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

8. Attractiveness and Academics

a) Doug is all out of proportion, his head is oversized for his body and his ears and nose are oversized for his head. Although I am teaching the average class this year, he was placed in mine because the slower class numbers were too high. Not only does he struggle with his school work but the children are always calling him "Ugly Dougly". (#1)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

b) Hopefully, Grant's good looks will carry him to places where his academics can't. Already you can tell that he's going to develop into a handsome young man. Grant may have to be retained this year if his marks don't pick-up. He looks like a future quarterback but I doubt that he'll be able to learn the different plays. (#10)

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER

WELCOME BACK

A Study on
Factors Affecting Teachers' Referral Decisions

Here it is September again and we are faced with a classroom full of new smiles. Each of our new children has the potential of being a special needs student. Teachers' referrals tend to be one of the most accurate and consistent diagnostic tools in the identification of special needs children. As an educator both your feelings and experience are invaluable in understanding the factors that motivate and/or discourage teachers from referring a child.

The purpose of this study is twofold, firstly, to determine what factors affect teachers' referral decisions and secondly, to determine future directions at both the system and school level to assist and support teachers making referrals.

As a busy educator myself, I have purposely limited the length of the questionaire to allow it to be completed in approximately twenty minutes. Lengthy deliberations over specific questions is not required. Please share with me your reactions to the information given. Space is left for any comments you might wish to make.

Please return the completed questionaire to the principal's office within the next two weeks, and have him check off your name. Your response to all sections of the questionaire is greatly appreciated and sincerely valued.

This study has been approved and is supported by the University of Alberta and the Cental Office Administration of your school district. Your cooperation will benefit future students and teachers.

Thankyou

Val Cameron

APPENDIX E

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionnaire

Factors Affecting Teachers' Referral Decisions

"A referral indicates a significant problem that is unlikely to be remediated without some form of additional intervention with the teacher or child."

Instructions: Please mark the appropriate blank.

Teaching Experience in years	__ 1 to 3	__3 to 10	__Over 10
Average # of students per year	__Under 20	__21 to 26	__Over 26
# of Referrals made in the past 3 years	__0	__1 to 5	__Over 5
Grades taught	__1 to 3	__4 to 6	__Other
Training in Special Education	__Inservices	__University courses	__None
Training in Early Childhood	__Inservices	__University courses	__None
Experience with Children on Individual Program Plans	__Some	__None	

Please respond to all questions. Your comments throughout are welcomed.

Instructions: Please circle the number which most accurately reflects your feelings.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. In my school district, it is the teachers' responsibility to identify special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5
2. The child will usually receive just as good or better quality help in my room as in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I am familiar with the types of programs offered in the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Children leaving, to go to resource room, leads to serious difficulties with classroom programming and evaluation. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I am familiar with the observable symptoms of special needs children at my grade level. 1 2 3 4 5
6. The Department of Education regulations stipulate the necessity of screening school populations for special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Children are moved into and out of the resource room on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Children suspected of having special needs often slip through a few grades before being recognized. 1 2 3 4 5
9. My principal "frowns on" teachers who can't handle the students placed in their classes. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Referring a child for further assessment rarely provides me with any new information about the child. 1 2 3 4 5
11. The program offered in the resource room tends to involve a lot of play with little academic transfer back to my class. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Contacting parents about their child's difficulties is one of the first steps I take. 1 2 3 4 5

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionnaire

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

13. Resource room placement for a disruptive child is appropriate as it benefits the children in the regular class. 1 2 3 4 5

14. A child suspected of having special needs should be referred even if he is achieving. 1 2 3 4 5

15. The resource room offers more assistance to the child than he can receive in a regular classroom. 1 2 3 4 5

16. My principal's attitude towards referrals encourages me to make referrals. 1 2 3 4 5

17. I am familiar with the criteria for admittance to the resource room. 1 2 3 4 5

18. In my situation, teaching the curriculum must take priority over students' individual difficulties. 1 2 3 4 5

19. I am unclear the as to information needed to complete a referral form. 1 2 3 4 5

20. No specific method is employed to identify and refer children with special needs in our school. 1 2 3 4 5

21. In my school district, a child who received resource room assistance in the previous year, will automatically continue in resource room without a referral from me. 1 2 3 4 5

22. The referral form used is too difficult and time-consuming to complete. 1 2 3 4 5

23. Regular class teachers are expected to teach any student assigned to their class without making referrals. 1 2 3 4 5

24. There is always a place in the resource room for another child. 1 2 3 4 5

25. Children suspected of having special needs should be referred in the first month of school. 1 2 3 4 5

26. If a student is placed in the resource room it saves time planning for individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5

27. I am unsure as to the behaviors and/or characteristics of special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

28. Alberta Education does not require the identification of special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

29. My school district has policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of children with special needs. 1 2 3 4 5

30. Children who attend resource room are often labelled by the other children. 1 2 3 4 5

31. I realize that referrals to special services are required by some of my students to enable them to attain success. 1 2 3 4 5

32. I am not aware of a set referral procedure at our school. 1 2 3 4 5

33. A child should be referred only if he is in danger of failing the grade. 1 2 3 4 5

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

34. It is difficult to refer a child much before January as a teacher doesn't know him well enough until then. 1 2 3 4 5

35. Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a large class, as they will have difficulty meeting individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5

36. A referral will do the child more harm than good. 1 2 3 4 5

37. If the child has special needs someone else would have referred the child before me. 1 2 3 4 5

38. Other teachers' opinions affect my referral decisions. 1 2 3 4 5

39. I have a set of both formal and informal criteria which I use to identify special needs children. 1 2 3 4 5

40. Concerns about the child's home life might cause me to make a referral. 1 2 3 4 5

41. Parents expressing concerns might cause me to make a referral. 1 2 3 4 5

42. The present system of preparing Individualized Program Plans is often not worth the effort. 1 2 3 4 5

43. The referral form used allows me a chance to share my observations and clarify the reason for the referral. 1 2 3 4 5

Instructions: Teachers in similar studies have been asked to comment on the barriers to and factors facilitating referrals. Space is provided below for your specific comments on these elements. Please feel free to respond in point form.

Barriers

Facilitating
Factors

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionaire

Instructions: Please read the following vignettes and decide whether you would refer the child described for further assessment by a specialist (e.g. principal, psychologist, nurse, counsellor, social worker). If you would refer the child mark **YES**, if you would not refer mark **NO**. If you would be unable to make a decision please **STATE** the additional information you would require to make a referral decision.

1. Doug is all out of proportion, his head is oversized for his body and his ears and nose are oversized for his head. Although I am teaching the average class this year, he was placed in mine because the slower class's numbers were too high. Not only does he struggle with his school work but the children are always calling him "Ugly Dougly".

YES___ NO___
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION___

2. Lorraine Smith is a new student in my class. When I contacted the teacher from her previous school she wished me luck. I got the distinct impression that her previous teacher was glad she transferred. Apparently what I thought were settling-in problems, demanding attention and acting out, are typical and persistent kinds of behaviors with Lorraine.

YES___ NO___
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION___

3. Jennifer is always speaking out and interrupting. She is aggressive and pushy with the other children. If things don't go her way she explodes, reasoning with her doesn't seem to help. Jennifer takes more of my time and energy than any five other children.

YES___ NO___
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION___

4. Jody has everything from the latest calculator watch to a home computer. His mom and dad are both lawyers and have bought a lot of educational software to help him at home. It has improved his work a little but I couldn't honestly say that he is even an average student. Maybe he is just playing games on that computer.

YES___ NO___
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION___

5. Chris is always taking the other children's things. I know he may have very little and that Dad just quit another job but Chris has to learn not to steal. When the other students do give him part of their lunch or a pencil he shows no gratitude and the next moment he could be hitting them. He is very demanding and always wants to be the center of attention. I waste a lot of time and energy just trying to control Chris.

YES___ NO___
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION___

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionaire

6. Kelsey White is your "Disney Movie" kind of child. She is petite and very pretty. She has already learned to use her looks to her advantage. Most of the girls want to be her friend even though she has to have her own way or she cries. She doesn't cry that much in class but has all sorts of other ways to constantly demand attention.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

7. Ling Chu just doesn't seem to be making any progress this year. His marks range from low average to below average. From what I've observed he may not be capable of doing any better. He seems to have friends and be accepted by the children even though he is one of the few Vietnamese children in our school.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

8. Darren's parents are his worst enemy. When I try to explain that his behaviors are inappropriate and disruptive to the class as well as himself, they insist that there is a personality conflict or that maybe I'm not giving him enough attention, or that maybe the rules are too strict. When I try to explain that his work is below average then the school standards are too high. They have had a tutor for him for over six months and he is still a grade behind the rest of the class.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

9. Michael is consistently out of his desk and when he is in his desk he's making noises or playing with something. Not only do his antics interrupt and distract me but most of the class is disrupted. The other children don't like his bossy, bully behavior.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

10. Hopefully, Grant's good looks will carry him to places where his academics can't. Already you can tell that he's going to develop into a handsome young man. Grant may have to be retained this year if his marks don't pick-up. He looks like a future quarterback but I doubt that he'll be able to learn the plays.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

11. Christine experiences little success in school. Each report card she receives below average marks. Comprehension of concepts in all subject areas is difficult for her and I am considering retention.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionnaire

12. Mark Jones has made little academic progress this year. His reading is slow and he stumbles over the words, even the ones he knows. He came to me below grade level and I've seen little improvement. I'm not sure he even knows any math facts. He's hesitant to ask questions and I often don't realize until too late that he's gotten lost.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

13. Rhonda Slagge never stops. I'm sure she is always dropping things just so she can get out of her desk to get them. I can't count the number of times she breaks her pencil in a day. Why such an unattractive child would constantly be doing things to make people look at her I can't imagine.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

14. It is difficult to see Ryan come in each day in the same clothes looking hungry. What little lunch he has is usually gone by recess. He is one of my weakest students but he seems to enjoy coming to school. On the last set of standardized tests he was over a year below grade level.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

15. I always thought native children were fairly passive and well behaved prior to meeting Randy Littlebear. Randy rarely raises his hand to ask anything, instead he just shouts it out,- when he's frustrated he swears and kicks the kids or desks around him. Unfortunately, his attendance to date has been perfect, mine may soon drop-off.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

16. Jeff understands much less of what I teach than the average child. His academic achievement is consistently below average. I'm not sure whether or not I'll be able to pass him in light of his performance.

YES__ NO__
ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION__

Instructions: Please describe a child you have referred below. Please feel free to use point form.

Comments:

APPENDIX F

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

Factors Affecting Teachers' Referral Decisions

"A referral indicates a significant problem that is unlikely to be remediated without some form of additional intervention with the teacher or child."

Instructions: Please mark the appropriate blank.

Teaching Experience in years	_8_ 1 to 3	_10_3 to 10	_24_Over 10
Average # of students per year	_10_Under 20	_24_21 to 26	_9_Over 26
# of Referrals made in the past 3 years	_3_0	_33_1 to 5	_7_Over 5
Grades taught	_23_1 to 3	_22_4 to 6	_1_Other
Training in Special Education	_11_Inservices	_13_University courses	_21_None
Training in Early Childhood	_6_Inservices	_15_University courses	_24_None
Experience with Children on Individual Program Plans	_31_Some	_12_None	

Please respond to all questions . Your comments throughout are welcomed.

Instructions: Please circle the number which most accurately reflects your feelings.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

		1	2	3	4	5
1.	In my school district, it is the teachers responsibility to identify special needs children.	16	25	1	1	0
2.	The child will usually receive just as good or better quality help in my room as in the resource room.	3	5	9	19	7
3.	I am familiar with the types of programs offered in the resource room.	4	29	3	7	0
4.	Children leaving, to go to resource room, leads to serious difficulties with classroom programming and evaluation.	2	6	2	23	9
5	I am familiar with the observable symptoms of special needs children at my grade level.	6	29	7	1	0
6.	The Department of Education regulations stipulate the necessity screening school populations for special needs children.	6	13	23	1	0
7.	Children are moved into and out of the resource room on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.	7	24	1	10	1
8.	Children suspected of having special needs often slip through a few grades before being recognized.	1	17	6	17	2
9.	My principal "frowns on" teachers who can't handle the students placed in their classes.	0	2	8	22	11
10.	Referring a child for further assessment rarely provides me with any new information about the child.	2	8	1	19	13
11.	The program offered in the resource room tends to involve a lot of play with little academic transfer back to my class.	1	4	3	26	9

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

		1	2	3	4	5
12.	Contacting parents about their child's difficulties is one of the first steps I take.	24	15	0	1	3
13.	Resource room placement for a disruptive child is appropriate as it benefits the children in the regular class.	1	7	11	18	8
14.	A child suspected of having special needs should be referred even if he is achieving.	4	22	9	8	0
15.	The resource room offers more assistance to the child than he can receive in a regular classroom.	13	21	4	3	2
16.	My principal's attitude towards referrals encourages me to make referrals.	6	25	7	5	0
17.	I am familiar with the criteria for admittance to the resource room.	11	26	3	3	0
18.	In my situation, teaching the curriculum must take priority over students individual difficulties.	0	3	0	25	15
19.	I am unclear the as to information needed to complete a referral form.	1	2	5	24	11
20.	No specific method is employed to identify and refer children with special needs in our school.	2	7	8	16	10
21.	In my school district, a child who received resource room assistance in the previous year, will automatically continue in resource room without a referral from me.	1	7	8	24	3
22.	The referral form used is too difficult and time-comsuming to complete.	1	2	6	26	8
23.	Regular class teachers are expected to teach any student assigned to their class without making referrals.	1	4	3	21	14
24.	There is always a place in the resource room for another child.	4	10	8	14	7
25.	Children suspected of having special needs should be referred in the first month of school.	4	14	4	19	2
26.	If a student is placed in the resource room it saves time planning for individual needs.	1	7	3	22	10
27.	I am unsure as to the behaviors and/or characteristics of special needs children.	1	6	5	25	6
28.	Alberta Education does not require the identification of special needs children.	0	1	19	12	11
29.	My school district has policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of children with special needs.	7	23	8	3	2
30.	Children who attend resource room are often labelled by the other children.	1	17	7	17	1

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

		1	2	3	4	5
31.	I realize that referrals to special services are required by some of my students to enable them to attain success.	10	28	3	1	1
32.	I am not aware of a set referral procedure at our school.	0	6	7	21	9
33.	A child should be referred only if he is in danger of failing the grade.	0	2	1	18	22
34.	It is difficult to refer a child much before January as a teacher doesn't know him well enough until then.	0	0	1	27	15
35.	Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a large class, as they will have difficulty meeting individual needs.	3	17	8	10	5
36.	A referral will do the child more harm than good.	0	2	2	19	20
37.	If the child has special needs someone else would have referred the child before me.	0	0	0	27	16
38.	Other teachers' opinions affect my referral decisions.	0	13	5	15	9
39.	I have a set of both formal and informal criteria which I use to identify special needs children.	5	26	6	6	0
40.	Concerns about the child's home life might cause me to make a referral.	2	23	6	12	0
41.	Parents expressing concerns might cause me to make a referral.	3	32	3	4	1
42.	The present system of preparing Individualized Program Plans is often not worth the effort.	1	3	17	18	4
43.	The referral form used allows me a chance to share my observations and clarify the reason for the referral.	5	28	7	2	1

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

BARRIERS:

6 unwillingness of parents, parents who take the referral personally
4 child s attitude towards placement, influence of placement on child .
2 parental disagreement
2 time before the child is assessed
2 availability of assessment services
2 physical time to make the referral
2 no improvement in students progress
2 too much time between testing and action
2 not enough time or space in the resource room
2 resource room teacher has a full load and won t listen to concerns
1 time and money for testing
1 groups should go to the resource room rather than individuals
1 only the poorest students can be dealt with
1 stigma attached to child
1 no correlation between work in class and resource room activities.
1 resource room activities are too much workbook activities
1 refelection on my professional competance
1 will the child be doing anything different in resource room
1 past referrals have not benefitted the child.
1 no feedback from resource room.
1 no information on what to do in class
1 child separated from rest of class, falls behind class.
1 late start of resource room program
1 attitude of administration
1 resource room priorization
1 time consuming pre-testing
1 once you fill out referral form and get parental consent its too long a process
1 work habits of student
1 sometimes not recognizing the students different needs
1 labelling causing more harm than good

23 teachers did not respond to this section

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

FACILITATORS:

3 good communication with resource room personnel

3 support of the principal

2 good communication with psychologist

2 quick response from psychologist

2 genuine interest to help of the resource room staff

1 finding child's areas of deficit

1 sympathetic resource room teachers

1 working specifically on problem

1 availibility of qualified personnel

1 short, easy to fill out forms

1 could be helpful to the student and teacher

1 testing results and good suggestions for the classroom

1 resource room teachers gear their program to what's going on in the classroom

1 child associates palcement with feelings of being special

1 clear procedures

1 easy to reach personnel

1 parents who respond positively

1 referral program in place which is well understood by staff

1 individual plans for individual students

1 child's attitude positive toward attending

1 need to improve reading level

1 classroom teacher support

1 competance of resource room staff

1 good parent-teacher relationships

26 teachers did not respond to this section

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

ETHNICITY AND ACADEMICS			
Q*7 LING CHU (non-white)	28	9	6
Additional Information Requested:			
2 academic achievement			
1 how well does she speak English			
1 the extent of her ESL program			
2 unspecified			
Q*12 MARK (white)	37	4	2
Additional Information Requested:			
1 was he in resource room before			
1 academic achievement			
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND BEHAVIOR			
Q*5 CHRIS (low)	26	13	4
Additional Information Requested:			
2 achievement record			
1 home situation			
1 give him more time and see if it continues			
Q*5 DARREN (high)	34	9	0
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ACADEMICS			
Q*4 JODY (high)	12	25	6
Additional Information Requested:			
1 how much time spent with parents			
1 how much time spent working			
1 achievement record			
1 work habits			
1 social behavior with other children			
1 unspecified			
Q*14 RYAN (low)	35	5	3
Additional Information Requested:			
1 work with Social Worker then refer			
2 unspecified			

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

VIGNETTES	YES	NO	ADD. INFO
GENDER AND BEHAVIOR			
Q#3 JENNIFER (girl)	22	16	5
Additional Information Requested:			
3 achievement record			
1 ability			
1 home situation, previous behavioral history			
Q#9 MICHAEL (boy)	12	22	9
Additional Information Requested:			
6 achievement record			
1 ability			
1 why does he want attention			
1 medical information			
GENDER AND ACADEMICS			
Q#11 CHRISTINE (girl)	39	4	0
Q#16 JEFF (boy)	31	9	3
Additional Information Requested:			
1 unspecified			
1 information regarding language and culture			
1 previous academic record and classroom behavior			
ETHNICITY AND BEHAVIOR			
Q#2 LORRAINE (white)	1	24	7
Additional Information Requested:			
3 achievement record			
1 maybe later on if I couldn't solve behavior problem			
1 attempt other methods first			
1 family background			
1 unspecified			
Q#15 RANDY (non-white)	19	16	8
Additional Information Requested:			
2 achievement record			
1 information from former teacher			
1 behavior			
1 has positive reinforcement been tried			
2 information about the home			
2 unspecified			

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

VIGNETTES	YES	NO	ADD. INFO
GENDER AND BEHAVIOR			
Q#3 JENNIFER (girl)	22	16	5
Q#9 MICHAEL (boy)	12	22	9
GENDER AND ACADEMICS			
Q#11 CHRISTINE (girl)	39	4	0
Q#16 JEFF (boy)	31	9	3
ETHNICITY AND BEHAVIOR			
Q#2 LORRAINE (white)	1	24	7
Q#15 RANDY (non-white)	19	16	8
ETHNICITY AND ACADEMICS			
Q#7 LING CHU (non-white)	28	9	6
Q#12 MARK (white)	37	4	2
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND BEHAVIOR			
Q#5 CHRIS (low)	26	13	4
Q#8 DARREN (high)	34	9	0
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ACADEMICS			
Q#4 JODY (high)	12	25	6
Q#14 RYAN (low)	35	5	3
ATTRACTIVENESS AND BEHAVIOR			
Q#6 KELSEY (attractive)	4	37	2
Q#13 RHONDA (unattractive)	10	27	6
ATTRACTIVENESS AND ACADEMICS			
Q#1 DOUG (unattractive)	22	8	13
Q#10 GRANT (attractive)	24	12	7

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

ATTRACTIVENESS AND BEHAVIOR

Q*6 KELSEY (attractive)	4	39	2
Additional Information Requested:			
1 achievement record			
1 unspecified			
Q*13 RHONDA (unattractive)	10	27	6
Additional Information Requested:			
5 achievement record			
1 is the teacher prejudice			
1 how does she get along with others			

ATTRACTIVENESS AND ACADEMICS

Q*1 DOUG (unattractive)	22	8	13
Additional Information Requested:			
5 how does he get along with others			
5 achievement record			
1 does he have a physical or cognitive disability			
1 how is his self concept			
1 why is he struggling			
3 unspecified			
Q*10 GRANT (attractive)	24	12	7
Additional Information Requested:			
4 achievement record			
1 social behavior			
2 unspecified			

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

REFERRALS

1. boy, slow learner, emotionally behind, intellectually behind, physically average, problems reading and on all assignments
2. history of resource room, weakness in basic math and reading, inappropriate behavior
3. aggressive, poor behavior, no respect for authority, lies, poor self image, poor homelife
4. stumbles over easy vocabulary, no confidence in reading ability, daydreams, trouble following directions, grade level ability in other areas, reading is holding him back
5. poor listening skills, inconsistent effort, inattentive, slow to get on task, poor understanding of verbal directions
6. wild speller, poor reading, unusual mistakes, good in math and general knowledge
7. boy, difficulty completing work on time, difficulty comprehending what he s read, low visual motor and perception
8. girl, disorganized, math problems, average language skills, mom wanting referral
9. average ability, poor organization, uncompleted work, no parental support, lack of concentration
10. old for grade, immature, short attention span, gross and fine motor poor, easily frustrated, poor verbal expression, poor entry skills for grade
11. average to below, easily frustrated, demanding mother, low social skills
12. girl, slower to understand, poor attention, delayed speech, masturbating, difficulty with abstract concepts, work neat but slow, seldom completed work on time
13. girl, difficulty in all subject areas, uncooperative mother, difficulty previous, transfer in
14. boy, inattentive, ok reading, written work is weak, spelling is lousy, confused at times
15. boy, below grade level, weak comprehension, needed time outs

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
RESULTS

16. boy, violent behaviors, physical abuse of kids and property, low achievement, irresponsible

17. boy, difficuly comprehending oral instructions, slow at everything, spaced out, negative attitude towards reading

18. attention problem, weak reading comprehension, weak spelling

19. boy, average intelligence, scored consistently low on written tests, ok on oral tests

20. weak academics, behavior problems, disruptive, short attention span

21. weak reading and language arts, strong math, weak sight vocabulary, no behavior problem

22. boy, weak in math facts, below average IQ

23. poor self image, weak reader, minimal work habits, very passive

24. very good verbal, good language, can t spell, poor copying skills, out of desk alot, can t memorize multiplication, easily frustrated with written work

25. very insecure, needs much assurance, withdraws, believes he can t do it, requires lots of individual attention

26. boy, failed every subject by 20 points, thought he was a big shot, large for age, experienced personality conflict with last teacher and was transferred to my class

27. boy, nervous habits, serious reversal problems, working at least a year below grade level, seeks constant attention, seeks reassurance, fear of making mistakes, alot of pressure from Mom to do better

28. socially and emotionally immature, poor fine and gross motor, learning disability effecting all areas, very delayed language development

15 teachers did not respond to this section

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionnaire
Results Page 12

Results:

Factors Affecting Teachers' Referral Decisions

"A referral indicates a significant problem that is unlikely to be remediated without some form of additional intervention with the teacher or child."

Instructions: Please mark the appropriate blank.

Teaching Experience in years	_8_ 1 to 3	_10_3 to 10	_24_Over 10
Average # of students per year	_10_Under 20	_24_21 to 26	_9_Over 26
# of Referrals made in the past 3 years	_3_0	_33_1 to 5	_7_Over 5
Grades taught	_23_1 to 3	_22_4 to 6	_1_Other
Training in Special Education	_11_Inservices	_13_University courses	_21_None
Training in Early Childhood	_6_Inservices	_15_University courses	_24_None
Experience with Children on Individual Program Plans		_31_Some	_12_None

Please respond to all questions . Your comments throughout are welcomed.

Instructions: Please circle the number which most accurately reflects your feelings.

1 STRONGLY AGREE 2 AGREE 3 UNSURE 4 DISAGREE 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

SYSTEM RELATED FACTORS	1	2	3	4	5
1. Alberta Education does not require the identification of special needs children. (#28)	0	1	19	12	11
The Department of Education regulations stipulate the necessity screening school populations for special needs children. (#6)	6	13	23	1	0
2. In my school district, it is the teachers responsibility to identify special needs children. (#1)	16	25	1	1	0
3. My school district has policies and procedures in place for the identification and referral of children with special needs. (#29)	7	23	8	3	2
No specific method is employed to identify and refer children with special needs in our school. (#20)	2	7	8	16	1
4. In my school district, a child who received resource room assistance in the previous year, will automatically continue in resource room without a referral from me. (#21)	1	7	8	24	3
5. Referring a child for further assessment rarely provides me with any new information about the child. (#10)	2	8	1	19	13
6. The referral form used is too difficult and time-comsuming to complete. (#22)	1	2	6	26	8
The referral form used allows me a chance to share my observations and clarify the reason for the referral. (#43)	5	28	7	2	1

Teachers Referral Decisions Questionaire
Results Page 13

	1	2	3	4	5
7. The present system of preparing Individualized Program Plans is often not worth the effort. (*42)	1	3	17	18	4

SCHOOL RELATED FACTORS

	1	2	3	4	5
8. The child will usually receive just as good or better quality help in my room as in the resource room. (*2)	3	5	9	19	7
The resource room offers more assistance to the child than he can receive in a regular classroom. (*15)	13	21	4	3	2
9. My principal's attitude towards referrals encourages me to make referrals. (*16)	6	25	7	5	0
My principal "frowns on" teachers who can't handle the students placed in their classes. (*9)	0	2	8	22	11
10. Children are moved into and out of the resource room on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. (*7)	7	24	1	10	1
11. The program offered in the resource room tends to involve a lot of play with little academic transfer back to my class. (*11)	1	4	3	26	9
12. There is always a place in the resource room for another child. (*24)	4	10	8	14	7
13. Children who attend resource room are often labelled by the other children. (*30)	1	17	7	17	1

TEACHER RELATED FACTORS

	1	2	3	4	5
14. Regular class teachers are expected to teach any student assigned to their class without making referrals. (*23)	1	4	3	21	14
I realize that referrals to special services are required by some of my students to enable them to attain success. (*31)	10	28	3	1	1
15. I am familiar with the types of programs offered in the resource room. (*3)	4	29	3	7	0
16. Children leaving, to go to resource room, leads to serious difficulties with classroom programming and evaluation. (*4)	2	6	2	23	9
17. Resource room placement for a disruptive child is appropriate as it benefits the children in the regular class. (*13)	1	7	11	18	8
18. If a student is placed in the resource room it saves time planning for individual needs. (*26)	1	7	3	22	10
19. I am familiar with the criteria for admittance to the resource room. (*17)	11	26	3	3	0
20. I am unclear the as to information needed to complete the referral form. (*19)	1	2	5	24	11
21. I am not aware of a set referral procedure at our school. (*32)	0	6	7	21	9

Teachers' Referral Decisions Questionaire
Results Page 14

	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am familiar with the observable symptoms of special needs children at my grade level. (*5)	6	29	7	1	0
I am unsure as to the behaviors and/or characteristics of special needs children. (*27)	1	6	5	25	6
23. In my situation, teaching the curriculum must take priority over students' individual difficulties. (*18)	0	3	0	25	15
24. Contacting parents about their child's difficulties is one of the first steps I take. (*12)	24	15	0	1	3
25. A child should be referred only if he is in danger of failing the grade. (*33)	0	2	1	18	22
A child suspected of having special needs should be referred even if he is achieving. (*14)	4	22	9	8	0
26. It is difficult to refer a child much before January as a teacher doesn't know him well enough until then. (*34)	0	0	1	27	15
Children suspected of having special needs should be referred in the first month of school. (*25)	4	14	4	19	2
27. Regular class teachers are more likely to make referrals when assigned a large class, as they will have difficulty meeting individual needs. (*35)	3	17	8	10	5
28. A referral will do the child more harm than good. (*36)	0	2	2	19	20
29. Children suspected of having special needs often slip through a few grades before being recognized. (*8)	1	17	6	17	2
If the child has special needs someone else would have referred the child before me. (*37)	0	0	0	27	16
30. Other teachers' opinions affect my referral decisions. (*38)	0	13	5	15	9
31. I have a set of both formal and informal criteria which I use to identify special needs children. (*39)	5	26	6	6	0
32. Concerns about the child's home life might cause me to make a referral. (*40)	2	23	6	12	0
33. Parents expressing concerns might cause me to make a referral. (*41)	3	32	3	4	1

APPENDIX G

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW
(CONDUCTED IN PERSON)

1. Could describe what you believe the role of the Department of Education is in regards to special needs children?

2. Could you describe your district's methods for identifying special needs children?

3. Some teachers felt that a referral provides little information they aren't already aware of, why do you think they might feel this way?

4. Why do you think some teachers might feel that the child will receive just as good or better quality help in their home room?

5. Some teachers commented about there being little academic transfer back to the regular class, why might they say this?

6. Regular class teachers sometimes feel that making a referral is a reflection on their competance and they are threatened, could you comment on this area?

7. Alot of teachers were undecided as to the appropriateness of placement of a disruptive child in the resource room, why might they feel like this?

8. Could you describe the observable symptoms of a special needs child at your grade level?

9. What are your feelings about special needs children being referred even when they are achieving?

10. Some teachers stated that referring a child for further assessment does more harm than good can you describe a referral experience where this might have been the case?

11. Most teachers indicated that other teachers' opinions did not affect their referral decisions, why do you think they would feel this way?

12. Could you describe the formal and informal criteria you use to identify special needs children at your grade level?

13. Many teachers stated that concerns about a child's home life would not cause them to make a referral, why might that be?

14. Many teachers stated that parents expressing concerns would not influence their decision to make a referral, could you comment on this?